



Time Out

AJHS Catcher Howard Can Pitch Too



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Me, Me, Me

I didn't have a chance to share with you my first ever from-the-fairway "eagle" that happened two weeks ago while playing the fourth hole at Las Colinas Golf Club in Queen Creek. I was 122 yards out and holed a pitching wedge on my way to a career-tying low round of even-par 71. Then just last week, this time playing the par four, 13th hole at Las Colinas, again from 122 yards, I was robbed of my second career from-the-fairway eagle when my approach shot landed four feet short of the hole, rolled to the cup and deflected off of the flagstick and settled two inches away. The flagstick was leaning forward which likely kept the ball from rolling in the cup.

My Thursday golf buddies just love it when I write about "my" good shots and good rounds but they always wonder why I never discuss my putting. Well, just for you guys, I nailed that two-inch putt for a birdie on the 13th hole. Doesn't matter which edge of the cup it hit - only matters where it ends up, right?

Mike, The Thief

Last week, during a baseball scrimmage game against the Pro Scout Academy League played at Mesa Skyline High School, Prospector junior-to-be Mike Davalos pulled off a steal of home plate, something I don't believe I've ever seen before from an AJHS player. Davalos, who has terrific speed and great baserunning smarts, timed his jump from third base perfectly against the PSAL pitcher and made it safely to home rather easily.

Being From A.J.

Before last week's District 7 Tournament game at Countryside Park in Mesa, a tournament rep came over and talked to the A.J. fans about the importance of good sportsmanship but he never went to the "other side" with the same speech until reminded to do so by the scorekeeper, who just happened to overhear a few A.J. fans wonder out loud if he had planned to do so.

Defensive Lapses Costly For AJHS Girls

By Chuck Baker
The News

Defense wins championships and lack thereof can spell doom as the Lady Prospector "Gold" Softball squad found out last Thursday at Kiwanis Park in Tempe.

After finishing the Tempe Summer League with a 6-2-1 overall record and a No. 2 seed for last Thursday's tournament involving the top four teams, the AJHS girls, who played some pretty good defense during the regular league, gave up five unearned runs on five defensive errors in an 8-7 loss to No. 3 seed Cave Creek Cactus Shadows, and then committed another five errors resulting in six unearned runs in a 6-5 loss to No. 4 seed Scottsdale Saguaro, leaving Apache Junction with a fourth place finish.

The losses to Cactus Shadows and Saguaro were particularly stinging for the AJHS girls

By Chuck Baker
The News

The Summer baseball program may already be paying off dividends for first-year head coach Preston English. A Summer program, in addition to showcasing young players and future potential stars, is also a chance for a coach to play his players in different positions and with this in mind, Coach English may have found a new starting pitcher in catcher Ryan Howard.

Howard, who started most of the games last year at catcher, got an opportunity to pitch some during last Tuesday's scrimmage game against the Pro Scout League Academy held at Mesa Skyline High School and came up with a stellar performance. The junior-to-be tossed three innings of one-hit ball and struck out four without issuing a base on balls. Howard allowed just two baserunners, one reaching via a fielding error, and sat down the final eight batters in the scrimmage, which unofficially went as an 8-6 victory for the Pro Scout League Academy.

Howard caught the first five innings and even gained the attention of the opposing team's coach, a pro scout nonetheless, with several perfectly executed

defensive plays behind the plate. He likely then caught the attention of his own coach with his three innings on the mound.

Howard's solid three innings from the mound followed another solid effort from southpaw Nathan Higginbottom, who is vying to become the team's No. 1 starter. Higginbottom, who will be a junior this Fall, also tossed three innings, allowing just one earned run on three hits. The southpaw has already had a few good outings this Summer and may now have some competition from his battery mate for the No. 1 starter.

While Howard took his turn on the mound, incoming freshman David Sandoval stepped in behind the plate at catcher and did a solid job. Sandoval has been one of those young up-and-coming stars who is getting the opportunity to showcase his talents and skills with the Summer program.

After the Prospectors scored a run in the first inning when Ryan Sparks came home on a wild pitch, the Pro Scout League Academy responded with two runs in the bottom of the first and then three more runs in the second inning for a 5-1 lead.

The Academy then stretched



Prospector catcher Ryan Howard uses perfect technique on these two pitches in the dirt in last Tuesday's Summer game at Skyline, coming up with a scoop on the left and blocking the ball in front of hom on the right. Howard also got a turn at pitching on Tuesday and threw three innings of one-hit ball and struck out four batters without issuing a base on balls.

its lead to 8-1 with a three-run, fifth inning and the Prospectors staged a late rally batting in the eighth and final inning with five runs to make the score close.

Center fielder Mike Davalos, who batted .400 last season as a sophomore, reached base safely in all five of his at-bats, walking twice, reaching on an error, getting hit by a pitch and coming up with an infield single. Davalos added three stolen bases, including a theft of home plate in that five-run,

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10-11 All Stars In Action

By Chuck Baker
The News

Apache Junction Little League's 10-11 All Star baseball team was in action this week competing in their District 7 Tournament played at Countryside Park in Mesa. The Apache Junction team lost their opening tournament game on Monday to Mesa American by the score of 13-1 and were scheduled to face a team from Red Mountain National on Friday night but the results were not available when *The News* went to press.

In the game against Mesa American, Apache Junction started well and was trailing just 3-1 until Mesa American scored seven runs batting in the third inning.

Facing a tough pitcher from Mesa American, the Apache Junction All Stars were held without a base hit but scored their lone run in the third inning when Alex Pacheco reached first base on a walk, advanced to second and third on passed



Apache Junction 10-11 All Star baseball player Vicente Ortega has no problem fielding this grounder during last week's District 7 Tournament played at Countryside Park in Mesa

balls and came home on a wild pitch.

The only other baserunners in the game for Apache Junction were Lucas Mayes who was hit by a pitch in the second inning and Blake Machajewski, who

reached via a base on balls in the third inning.

Pitchers in the game for Apache Junction included Adam Abbatacola, Mayes and

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AJHS Basketball Finishes Strong

Wins over Westwood and Tempe to wrap up Summer League play

By Chuck Baker
The News

Behind a well executed man-to-man defense, a quick start and a 14-2 run, the Prospector basketball team finished the Skyline Summer League strong with wins over Mesa Westwood and Tempe in perhaps their best night of Summer hoops.

Opening against Westwood last Tuesday, Apache Junction was clinging to a 15-14 lead at halftime but then came out with a 14-2 run over the first 12 minutes of half number two and went to defeat the Warriors 36-26.

Colt Grandstaff led the Prospectors with his 16 points, seven rebounds and two steals. Anthony Dunaway scored 8 points, six of those coming during

that second-half run, Brandon Robbins and Ian Firnbach each added 4 points and four rebounds, Medhi Noudali added 2 points, three rebounds, two assists and two steals, Kyrel Parker scored a bucket to go along with three rebounds and Ravvi Patel also pulled down three boards.

Apache Junction got off to a great start in their second game against Tempe, leading 19-8 after the first fifteen minutes and held on for a 45-36 win over the Buffaloes, avenging a 44-38 loss to Tempe two weeks earlier.

Brandon Robbins, making his debut into the starting lineup last week, scored 16 points and grabbed eight rebounds to

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Apache Junction basketball player Medhi Noudali (right) came up with this nifty reverse lay-up for two of his six points in last Tuesday's Summer Basketball League game against Tempe played at Mesa Skyline High School

since all three teams are all members of the same Desert Sky Region.

During the regular league, Apache Junction had beaten Cactus Shadows 4-3 and played the Lady Falcons to a 3-3 tie and had also beaten Saguaro 10-0 but last Thursday was not their night despite an impressive last-inning comeback in the Cactus Shadows game.

Trailing 7-3, the Lady Prospectors scored four runs in the bottom of the seventh to send the game into extra innings.

Using the International Rule of starting an extra inning with a baserunner on second base, Cactus Shadows was able to score one run in the top half of the eighth inning while the potential game-tying runner for Apache Junction was thrown out at home plate for the third and final out in the bottom of

see **Softball**, page C-3



April Haygood came up with a clutch base hit and RBI in the seventh inning of last Thursday's Tempe Summer League Tournament played at Kiwanis Park. Trailing Cactus Shadows 7-3 and batting in the last half of the seventh, the AJHS girls scored four runs to tie the game and send in into extra innings. Cactus Shadows would later score the game-winning run in the top of the eighth inning and hold on for an 8-7 win but it was a great Summer for the AJHS girls who field two teams in the Summer league.