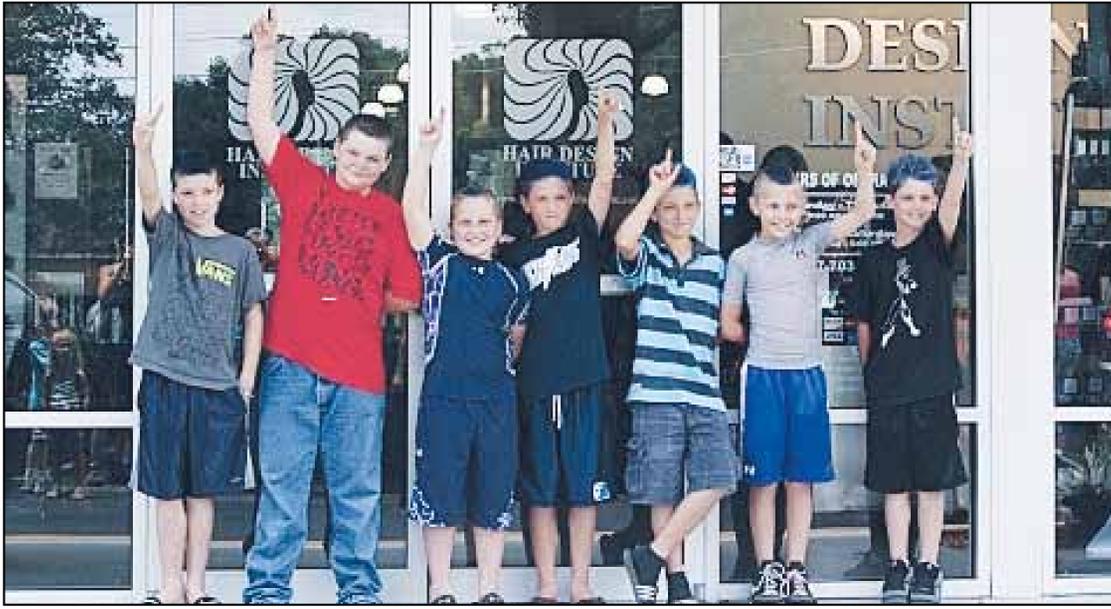


Apopka Little Leaguers show solidarity with new hair-dos



After their hair coloring, the teammates from the 9-10 Apopka American team stand outside Hair Design Institute of Apopka, which cut and colored the players' hair for \$10 each. They got their new hair-dos on Tuesday, July 12.



Family members Amber Pugh, (l), sister of Bryan Pugh, and Alexis Powell, sister of Kevin McGrath, also had their hair colored.



Kathy Timpe of the Hair Design Institute brushes on the blue hair coloring of the new mow-hawk sported by Apopka Little Leaguer Spencer Hancock.



Getting his hair prepared for the cut and coloring is Bryan Pugh, as Tiffany Clark makes sure it's done correctly.

Quest: Sectional tournament features four teams from Central Florida

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is today, Friday, July 15, at 8 p.m. Section 5 consists of District 3, 14, 23 and 24.

"We won one game by 10 runs (in the district tournament)," Apopka coach Ron Anderson said. "We came from behind to win another one. Then, we took a lead early and held on to win the last pool and championship games. So, we have seen every type of game we can be involved in at the sectional and won. That gives us a certain level of confidence. But with that said, we could still improve our hitting and offense. It was good enough to win at the district, but this is the sectional championship, so we have to get better."

"We will need the hitting if we have an off-day pitching or defensively. The other teams are going to have pitching staffs and defenses just as good as ours. So, just in general, we need to be a little bit more explosive on offense to offset the quality of pitching and defense. We have been working on being more disciplined at the plate. Again, it is good, but as each team advances to the next level of play, there is still room for it to get better. Adding that little bit more of a dimension can be the difference."

The scouting line on the Apopka 9-10 American team is pitching, pitching and more pitching with timely hitting.

During the district championship tournament, Oviedo had the honor of being the first to find out just how accurate it is, as the Seminole County team was shut down at the plate and Apopka's bats were hot early. The result was the simplest of baseball's formulas, taking an early lead and then relying on pitching and defense to close out the game, being executed almost perfectly as Apopka rolled to an opening 11-1 victory.

Apopka began its onslaught by scoring three runs during the first. It began with Tyner, the leadoff hitter, reaching base on an infield single, as he hit the ball deep into the hole on the left side of the field. The next batter, Xavier Anderson, walked. Two batters later, Josh Morse singled and then



Pitcher Jared Tyner led the Apopka American squad to a victory over the Apopka National team in the District 23 championship game.

Cody Miller doubled to bring in three runs.

Pitcher Colton Griffis began the game by retiring the side in order. Then, after Oviedo scored its only run of the game, he retired seven of the final nine batters and one of the batters reached base on an error.

Apopka banged out 10 hits, including a 3-for-3 performance from Cody Miller.

After taking the lead early and then staying in control of the game against Oviedo, Apopka had to show it

has some mettle as well, coming from behind to score a 7-5 victory over Maitland.

Maitland led by a 5-4 score as the bottom of the fourth started. It had scored three runs during its half of the frame to take the lead and two of the first three Apopka batters struck out. However, the second batter, Bryan Pugh, singled through the middle and would become Apopka's ace up the sleeve when Morse connected for a base hit.

Pugh had already advanced to

second on a wild pitch and then both runners advanced on a double steal. The potential of the single came to fruition with next batter, Miller. He ripped a double down the left field line to bring in the two runners and give Apopka the lead for good at 6-5. Roberto Thelusma pitched the first two innings. He was followed to the mound by Tyner and Morse.

Apopka finished off its undefeated run through pool play and clinched a berth in the championship game with a 5-2 victory against Lake Mary, which was predicated by drawing first blood in its first opportunity.

Xavier Miller drew a walk and then, two batters later, Chase Wood found the left field gap to give his team a 1-0 lead after the first inning.

With Griffis returning to the mound after he started the opening game of the tournament and pitching solidly, Apopka then took the lead for good with a two run top of the second. Walks to Jordan Bostwick and Griffis set the stage. With two outs, Tyner hit a hard but fieldable grounder to the third baseman, who failed to come up with it cleanly.

Apopka made its final push to win the pool as it put the game away during the fifth. This time, Miller was hit by a pitch. He stole second base and, two batters later, Wood stroked a liner through the middle to increase the lead to 4-2. Then Morse finished off the victory in style as he roped a double into the left field gap.

With a berth in the Section 5 championship tournament on the line, the championship game became what everyone expected it to be, a collision course between the two Apopka teams as they had combined for a 5-0 record during pool play.

But for as good as the Apopka American team had been during pool play, it was even better when the stakes were at their highest, as it put together its best game to date and took a 3-0 victory.

In what was a championship worthy game, Tyner out-dueled the Apopka National pitching staff as only one of the runs scored was earned.

Tyner's performance wasn't just brilliant, it was a brilliant one during

a runs-were-at-a-premium, pitchers' duel. The three pitchers (the National team used two) combined to give up only one earned run. Tyner retired 18 of the 20 batters he faced and retired the side in order five out of the six innings.

"Winning Friday night is important," Anderson said about the opening game of the Section 5 tournament. "It takes away the stress which comes with having to win the rest of the games and the urgency to do it. I'm sure all the teams will be throwing their ace, so we have to be at our best. We feel good about what we have done, but, again, we have to continue to do what we have done, solid pitching and defense. And add some more hitting to it. It is about doing it as a team. Talent wins games, but teamwork wins championship and we have found a way to do that."

In addition to Apopka, this year's champions are St. Cloud (District 3), Windermere American (District 14) and Delaney Park (District 24). The district championship tournament has two pools and the winner of each meets in a championship game, but the sectional championship is decided by pool play alone. Each team plays the other three one time and whoever has the best record is the champion.

"When they came out of the gates, they came out strong and have continued it into the sectional tournament," Apopka Little League President Gary Odom said. "It is a good group of players, both as ballplayers and young adults. Both characteristics have been important to the team winning the district championship. They play a lot of travel ball, so they are used to the atmosphere the sectional tournament will have."

"They are very skilled as individuals, but they understand winning comes as a team and that is what the do. They work as a team, because that is how teams win. And they have very good coaches who push that in everything they do. They will have to deal with facing teams they haven't before, but everyone is at that disadvantage. It should make for some good ball-games. We are very proud of them and what they have accomplished."