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KENT LITTLE LEAGUE: 9-10 All-Stars fundamentally sound, talented



Ryan Anderton helped pitch Kent's 9-10 All-Stars to the district title. Anderton and the Kent team will look to continue the winning ways on Saturday (July 11) at the state tournament.
COURTESY PHOTO/D1 Photography

By **ERICK WALKER**
 Kent Reporter Sports reporter
 Jul 16 2009, 12:18 PM · **UPDATED**

It was textbook baseball at its finest. Good pitching, sound defense and timely hitting.

Add it up and there wasn't a team that could stop Kent's 9-10 All-Stars during last month's District 10 tournament. Now, more than three weeks removed from knocking off Auburn 4-1 for the district title, the Kent Little Leaguers are looking toward this weekend,

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when they travel to Valley Ridge Park in SeaTac to play in the state tournament. Kent opens the tournament at 11 a.m. against South Skagit.

For the group of 9 and 10 year olds, the tournament marks the high point of the Little League season.

No team will advance past the double-elimination tournament, but there will be a champion. And judging from Kent's performance at the district tournament, the group is clearly plenty talented enough to bring home some hardware.

"We played pretty well (at the district tournament)," conceded Kent coach Steve Wright.

Pretty well, however, might be the understatement of the season. Four different Kent players hit better than .400 for the tournament: Travis Hansen (.636), Jaylen Eichler (.545), Ryan Anderton (.400) and Jacob Anderson (.500). Anderton also clubbed a home run and drove in nine while middle-of-the-order thumper Anderson added six RBIs.

In all, Kent outscored its opponents 38-7.

But the talk of the tournament proved to be the golden right arm of Eichler, the team's ace. Eichler wasn't just good, he was downright dominant, picking up a pair of wins and throwing 9 2/3 shutout innings for the Kent team. Even more impressive, however, might be the fact that Eichler fanned 16 batters and walked just two.

"He throws pretty hard," Wright said. "He's a power-type pitcher, has a good offspeed pitch and gave everybody who he faced fits."

Indeed he did.

Anderton was nearly as tough on the mound in the championship game, allowing just one run in 5 2/3 innings of work to pick up the win. Ben Wadowski, No. 3 in the rotation, showed plenty of grit as well, working five strong innings in Kent's 17-6 win over Bonney Lake. Wadowski also showed plenty with his bat, collecting three hits and three RBIs.

Meanwhile Kent's defense, especially that of shortstop Bennett Harrison and catcher Cody Faulkner, proved to be up to the task at the district tournament.

Now, however, a bigger task lies ahead.

"If we're going to win (state), everybody is going to have to contribute," Wright said.

- **HEAD COACH:** Steve Wright.
- **RECORD:** 4-0.
- **ACE ON THE HILL:** Jaylen Eichler. The hard-throwing Eichler controlled the district tournament, winning two games and striking out 16 in 9 2/3 innings.
- **BIG BOPPERS:** Ryan Anderton and Jacob Anderson. There won't be many teams at state that can challenge the middle of this lineup. During the district tournament, Anderton hit .400 with 1 home run and 9 RBIs. Anderson was just as good, batting .500 with six RBIs.
- **THE IGNITOR:** Travis Hansen, Kent's leadoff hitter, was the offensive catalyst at district, going 7-for-11 at the plate.

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