

Malibu Little League's mid-season report

The Phillies look to win fourth Majors championship in a row while the Braves lead Minors baseball.

By Dick Dornan
Special to The Malibu Times

Five weeks of fun and competitive baseball have given way to two weeks of a well-deserved spring break for Malibu Little Leaguers, who reached the midway juncture of their season last week. Here's a rundown of the 2014 season thus far.

Majors Baseball

Led by Manager Len Simonian, the Phillies are on a quest for a fourth consecutive MLL Majors championship.

Despite a change in lineup every year, the Phillies have racked up a record of 49-9-1 over the last three seasons, including 7-3-1 this year. They started off the season at 0-2-1 but have since won the last seven of eight to regain first place.

Last Saturday, the Phillies defeated the Reds 4-2 behind Trent Simonian, who threw 4 2/3 innings, allowing only one run on three hits and striking out six batters.

But the Dodgers remain close behind the Phillies, claiming second place with a 6-3 record. Most of their losses have come at the hands of the division-leading Phillies. The boys in blue have lost two of their three meetings thus far against the Phillies, and the teams meet again April 23.

In an impressive pitching performance last Saturday, the Dodgers' Brian

MAJORS BASEBALL

Phillies	7-3-1
Dodgers	6-3
Red Sox	3-6
Reds	2-6-1

AAA MINORS BASEBALL

Braves	9-1
Angels	6-4-1
Dodgers	6-4-2
Orioles	4-4
Giants	3-7-1
Red Sox	2-7

Rubenstein tossed a one-hitter in 5 2/3 innings in a 2-0 shutout against the Red Sox.

"He pitched like a big leaguer," Dodgers manager Brandt Andersen said. "To throw a game like that is pretty fantastic. In Little League or any league, that's an awesome feat."

Rubenstein, 12, struck out 13 Red Sox batters in a dominating effort to close out the first half of the season.

"I felt really good. My arm was cooperating. I've never gotten 13 strikeouts. I never really pitched too often so it's good to know that I can," Rubenstein said. "We started off real good but in the last couple of games we weren't hitting as well. But then we came back today and showed that before we go to spring break we got to leave winning."

The Dodgers scored in the first inning on a bases-loaded walk that brought home Jared Hughes. The Dodgers struck again in the fifth when Kayne Hunter tripled in Strider Ellis for the game's final run.

For Anderson and the blue crew, it's



Photos by Dick Dornan / TMT
Dodgers pitcher Brian Rubenstein



The Braves' Elijah Clayton slides in safely before the tag.

been an enjoyable season.

"These kids are so apt to learn about life, about baseball, about just everything. They suck it in like sponges right now. It's been a great time and this has been a great group of boys," said Andersen, whose son, James, earned the save versus the Red Sox on a strikeout with runners on first and second.

AAA Minors Baseball

The Braves have been the dominant team in the AAA division with a host of other squads looking to break through.

In a topsy-turvy game last Saturday morning, the Braves outlasted the Angels, 15-8, in a wild affair.

"There are no easy victories going on right now. I take my hat off to the Angels, who came out ready to play today. We did just a little bit better than them," Braves coach Mario Miranda said.

Trailing 3-2, the Braves scored four runs in the top of the third inning to go up 6-3. The Angels responded with four runs to take a brief 7-6 lead after

three innings.

But in the final three innings, the Braves scored nine runs to come away with the victory.

McLane O'Rourke went 3-for-4 with five runs-batted-in (RBI) while Stevie Prudholme and Elijah Clayton each scored four runs. James Nizam hit his first-ever home run, a two-run shot to the left centerfield gap that resulted in an inside-the-park home run and a loud roar from the crowd.

After the game, Braves outfielder Riley Banvard summed up his team's performance.

"I thought we played good," Banvard said. "We got all the grounders. I thought we did a good job of pitching. We work as a team. We hit the ball and we play defense."

The season resumes April 21 with the playoffs slated to begin May 10.

"We want everyone to come out here and learn the game of baseball," Miranda said. "The kids are having a great time battling against each other. Everyone is getting better right now."

Boys lacrosse vies for winning record

By Joshua Spidel
The Malibu Times

Coming into the game last Wednesday, the Malibu Sharks lacrosse team had one goal in mind: get within one win of a .500 record.

In a rematch against West Ranch, they met that goal with an 8-4 win led by attacker Duke Conrad, who scored five goals in his first game returning from injury.

Malibu's first match this season against West Ranch resulted in a 9-8 loss and the Sharks were looking to strike back with many key players returning from injury.

"We did not possess the ball well the first time. The big thing going into this game was possession and ball control," head coach Mark DeOliveira said.

But throughout Wednesday's bout, it was clear that the Sharks had the game under control in terms of possession, rarely letting West Ranch go on the attack. The Sharks scored four goals in the first quarter alone.

"It's nice to be back and dictate the pace," said Conrad, who scored three of the first quarter goals.

After the quick start, the time of possession evened out in the second as both



Joshua Spidel / TMT
The Sharks lacrosse team talks strategy during a game against West Ranch.

teams went on the attack and West Ranch scored another goal to make it 4-2 by the end of the half. During the quarter, Malibu's defense looked a lot weaker than in the first and West Ranch created a lot of opportunities for shots on goal. It was certainly not what DeOliveira had in mind, but the Sharks still had the lead.

Going into the half, Malibu needed to regain control of possession and play solid defense. Ricky Alba, goalie for the Sharks, trusted Sharks' defensive power.

"I have confidence in my defense," Alba said.

Senior starters lead by example for Malibu boys volleyball



Dick Dornan / TMT
Senior captains Chris Papavassiliou (left) and Jonathan Baldwin

By Dick Dornan
Special to The Malibu Times

Looking more and more like a future coach, Chris Papavassiliou took the court last week determined to help his teammates.

And that's exactly what the four-year Malibu High boys volleyball starter had to do after learning Coach Ainess Padda would be missing practice.

The team didn't miss a beat, as Papavassiliou guided his peers through drills and instruction for two hours. Coming off a three-set loss to Oak Park the previous week, the Sharks desperately needed the work and Papavassiliou delivered in grand style.

"This team is very inexperienced. The first couple of practices we had to teach a couple of the kids what volleyball is and how to play it," said Papavassiliou, a co-captain and outside hitter who earned first-team and second-team all-league honors the last two seasons, respectively.

"People are learning as they are playing. We are a team but everybody has work to do," he said.

On this particular day, with the undivided attention of each of his eight peers, Papavassiliou emphasized focusing throughout practice and playing hard as they would in a game.

The Sharks moved crisply from drill to drill as Papavassiliou described in detail specific volleyball technique while stressing the importance of making the most out of practice.

Another senior starter making a difference on the team is co-captain Jonathan "Boogie" Baldwin, who has set a high bar when it comes to work ethic and self-discipline.

Papavassiliou and Baldwin form the heart and soul of a Sharks' squad that consists of only nine players, many of whom are young and inexperienced.

Padda, in her first year as head coach for the MHS boys and girls volleyball programs, said she is fortunate to have two seniors who mean so much to the program.

"Chris and Boogie ... have led our team in tough matches and I know that without them our team wouldn't

be able to function," Padda said.

Malibu (2-6 overall, 1-5 in league) has taken its share of hits in competition against the likes of Oaks Christian and Oak Park, two traditionally strong volleyball programs. But that hasn't stopped the Sharks' thirst to improve as a team.

"It's difficult when you put kids in that situation and expect to win," Papavassiliou said. "But when we looked at film it was impressive to see the kids who have been playing volleyball for less than a month how well they did. We need to continue to focus on our game mentality."

Baldwin, a three-year starter and setter for this year's team, has witnessed growth in his teammates and understands the value of practicing and improving as the season progresses.

It's two victories this year, Malibu defeated Carpinteria, 3-2, and Cate, 3-1.

"Everyone has improved over the last two weeks and the wins against Carpinteria and Cate were definitely confidence boosters," Baldwin said. "We just need to keep practicing. It's all about repetition with hitting, passing, everything. Hopefully by the end of the season we will be a well-coached team that knows what they are doing and we can compete with every team in our league."

Players such as middle Luke Larson, outside hitter Danny Maier, libero Vinny Hannely, opposite hitter Dane Marshall and middle Chris Hall have benefitted from the leadership and guidance of Papavassiliou and Baldwin.

With an energetic coach in Padda and two seasoned veterans leading the way, it's onward and upward for the Sharks for the remainder of the season.

"These boys have grown tremendously. They have learned to play as a team, work hard, and believe it or not they have transformed into volleyball players," Padda said. "I think this second half of the season will be interesting. We may shock a few teams because I feel most teams underestimate us. We are like the dark horse of the Tri-Valley League, and I can't wait for what's to come."

Fun runners

The Fifth Annual Eagle Invitational Track and Field Meet took place at Chaminade High School. Six schools competed, including Our Lady of Malibu.



Our Lady of Malibu School's girls novice 4x100 relay team wins first place with a time of 1:04:14. Pictured, Hazel Moder, Jacqueline Reynaga, Jade Calabria and Camille Annett



Photos courtesy Lisa Hall
The third-grade girls novice team display their ribbons for the 50-meter run. Pictured, from left: Sofia Gillen, Sophia Springer, Sophia Hall, Daniela O'Neill and Kate Hall

Soccer under the sun



Photo courtesy Steve Prudholme
Malibu locals participate in the 2014 Copa Cabana Zuma Beach Soccer Tournament. Pictured, from left, back row: Coach Ross Greaney; middle row: Sasha Vogel, Sophia Prudholme, Cameron Millett, Emily Spaeth and Sydney Comfort; front row: Jenna Newman, Macy Rose Lee and Sydney Reese

The 2014 Copa Cabana Zuma Beach Soccer Tournament took place March 22 and 23. The

CVU GO2 White Stars won the Championship in the GU11 Division. The girls went 4-0 and outscored

their opponents 25-2. The team includes two Malibu locals: Sasha Vogel and Sophia Prudholme.

Free football clinic

Malibu resident and former NFL player Perry Klein is leading a free football clinic on Friday, April 18. The clinic will be hosted by the newly created Malibu Youth Football organization and take place on the Malibu High School football field.

Klein will cover drills and a range of tips and exercises for those interested in playing football. For more information, contact michaelbonewitz@gmail.com.

MHS upcoming games

Fri., April 11
JV Baseball vs. Santa Paula, at home, 3:30 p.m.
Varsity baseball vs. Santa Paula, at Santa Paula, 3:30 p.m.