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# Opener worth wait for Portsmouth

By **DAN DOYON**  
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July 07, 2009 6:00 AM

**RYE**— For three weeks, the only action the Portsmouth 9- and 10 year old Little League All-Star team got was against one another in practice.

While Portsmouth coach Joe Arsenault saw plenty of rust and room for improvement in his team's District II round-robin tournament opener Monday, it was worth the wait.

Pitchers Sam Grattan and Jimmy Dowd combined to walk eight Rye batters, but they allowed only one hit in Portsmouth's 8-1 victory at Flash Jenness Field. Grattan started the game and didn't allow a hit in his 3 2/3 innings of work. He worked around five walks with eight strikeouts.

Portsmouth (1-0) scored four runs each in the third and fifth innings and finished with seven hits on the evening. Catcher Beau Arsenault had two of those hits, while Zack DeFreeze's two-run double broke the game open in the third.

"We'll take the win, but I told the kids you have to play a little better than that to reach the goal you're looking for," Joe Arsenault said. "Our pitching was a little rusty. We don't have good hitting team; we have a contact team, which took until about the third inning to show, so we'll have to rely a lot on defense.

"It was our first game, so we got the jitters out," Arsenault added.

Rye (0-3) dropped its first two games of the tournament to Laconia, 10-2, and Somersworth, 16-1. Coach Dan Wilson felt that this was the best game his team played.

"That's actually the best game we played; I was proud of the kids. We were all saying how this was a good effort from our team and we played defense really well," Wilson said.

Grattan walked three but struck out the side in the first two innings, while Rye starter Eli Wilson also walked three but held Portsmouth hitless. Grattan stranded another Rye runner in the top of the third to give Portsmouth another chance at Wilson.

"Sammy's a pitcher's pitcher; he's not going to blow anyone away. He did miss some corners," Arsenault said. "But we haven't pitched against anybody but ourselves. Pitching against (batting practice) in practice is a lot different then pitching in a game."

Kobie Taylor was on second base with one out when Josh Saurman delivered the game's first hit, a run-scoring double. Kyle Maurice walked and Arsenault loaded the bases on a bunt single. Wilson plunked Steven Lalime on the back to force home Saurman. DeFreeze stepped up next with a two-run single to left field for a 4-0 Portsmouth lead.

"That was a big hit Zack had coming off the bench," Joe Arsenault said. "I've got 14 kids I can shuffle in and out and I'm comfortable with whoever is in there."

Dowd replaced Grattan with two outs in the fourth. Dowd worked a scoreless fifth when Rye scored its lone run in the sixth. Jack Ledger drew a walk and wound up on third after a wild pitch. Jack Fox's single plated Ledger.

"We got our bats going a little late, but other than that, I thought both of our guys pitched well and our

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"We got our bats going a little late, but other than that, I thought both of our guys pitched well and our defense played really well," Dan Wilson said. "You've got to give credit to Portsmouth. They got guys on, they got hits, but we didn't give the game away at all."

Portsmouth scored four runs in the fifth off Rye reliever Trevor Durkin. Nat Jenkins tripled in Arsenault. Jared Padgett and Taylor had RBI groundouts, while Grattan's singled scored Christian Peete.

"The kids need playing time; that's Rye's third game, so I would think they were a little more relaxed than us," Arsenault said. "It was our first, so we'll see how we look after our third."

Portsmouth hosts Somersworth on Wednesday, while Rye hosts Belmont on Saturday



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