

SIMMONS SAYS

JEFFERY
SIMMONS



Loving the HR derby

Even as my interest in baseball slowly wanes, I always make time for the home run derby.

It's the ultimate watching experience – a strong-man competition which doesn't require the participant to be built like a mountain (though it never hurts). The only thing missing now is Chris Berman's "back, back, back... GONE!" call.

This year's derby didn't disappoint. Bandana-wearing Bryce Harper pleased his hometown fans by claiming the title in Washington over Cubs giant Kyle Schwarber. Harper went on a tear in the final minute of the last round, launching nine of his last 10 pitches into the night as the crowd went wild.

I was able to sit down and watch the derby with my brother and Kaleb Rymer, an expert home-run hitter who launched towering shots at the Babe Ruth field before graduating to hitting moon balls at every softball field in Warren County. During the event, we debated what an all-time derby would look like – of course requiring a time machine, a necessity in any armchair sports debate.

Our final list looked like this:

MARK MCGWIRE AT FENWAY PARK – We saw this show in 1999, when the Cardinal slugger routinely sailed shots over the Green Monster and into the Boston streets. When it comes to a home run derby, I don't care about steroids. It's all about putting on a show, and McGwire did that.

SAMMY SOSA AT TURNER FIELD – Again, another all-time classic performance we've seen. Sosa won the derby in 2000 in Atlanta, with the signature shot being Sosa slamming a ball into centerfield that drilled the jumbotron. Sosa hit two 500-foot homers, an awe-inspiring sight.

KEN GRIFFEY JR AT YANKEE STADIUM – The Kid was tailor-made to succeed in the home run derby. The sweet-swinging lefty with the backwards cap won the derby three times, but those came in Pittsburgh, Colorado and Boston, respectively. Give Griffey the short porch in Yankee Stadium and it's a wrap.

BARRY BONDS AT AT&T PARK – The home-run king splashing shots into the bay would be must-watch TV.

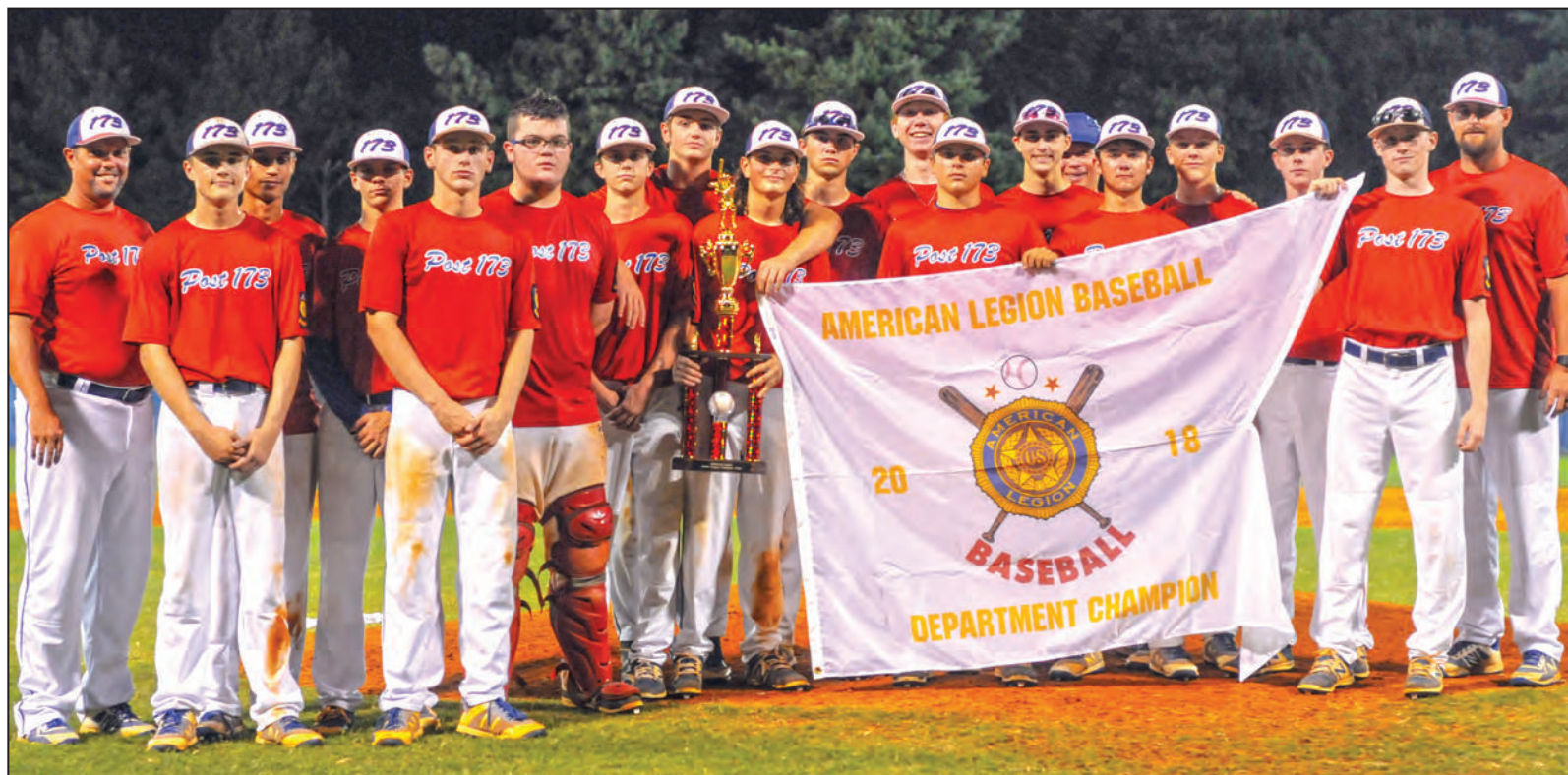
Those four were must-haves, but the field could easily include by current Yankee teammates Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton, who won the last two derbies before Harper. Nobody will argue with a pair of guys who look like NFL tight ends hitting 500-foot bombs.

Go back to 2008 and grab Josh Hamilton as well. He still holds the record for home runs in a single round, launching 28 in Yankee Stadium.

Add prime Prince Fielder and Yoenis Cespedes, both two-time winners, and you may have the greatest modern home run derby ever.

I'd watch every minute.

State champs



Photos provided

The Post 173 17U baseball team won the state title in Columbia Monday. Members of the team are, from left, assistant coach Brent Whitlock, Heath Kuykendall, Omari Harris, Justin Brantley, Kasen Holder, Braden Bottoms, Joey Burgess, Rylan Holder, Brandon Hennessee, Wyatt Wilson, Hunter Adams, Trace Adcock, Dylan Ward, coach Trice Powers, Westin Wilson, Ty Martin, John Garrett, Will Rivers, and assistant coach Matt Shepherd.

Post 173 finishes perfect to win state tournament

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

In the first year bringing back American Legion baseball locally, Post 173 will get to add some decorations as well.

The 17U Post 173 team claimed the state championship in the Tennessee American Legion tournament held in Columbia. Post 173 finished a 4-0 run through the tournament, which began last Thursday, with a 10-5 victory Monday night in the championship over Columbia Post 19.

"Everybody contributed to winning the title," said Trice Powers, who coached the squad. "All summer, we've been rolling in guys during games. When we went into the tournament, we put the guys out there to go win it."

"Some games we used all 16 guys. Everybody was locked in and ready."

Dylan Ward shined the brightest throughout the tournament, earning him the distinction as tournament MVP. The honor was a big boost to the upcoming senior, who will receive \$500 toward college upon graduation.

Ward wasn't in the middle of the action in the championship, but the lasting impression was his domination of Columbia on the mound in the team's opening game.

"Dylan set the tone for us with the win over Columbia. It was a phenomenal effort, which he followed up with the game-winning RBI against Tullahoma," said Powers.

Post 173 used a trio of pitchers in the championship, starting with Trace Adcock before turning to Kasen Holder. Holder held down the fort, earning the win after Post 173 scored six runs in the sixth to swing the game. Heath Kuykendall came in late to get the final outs.

Powers believed the game changed when a defensive gaffe turned into a double play.

Post 173 was clinging to a 4-2 lead in the bottom of the frame when Columbia brought the tying run to the plate after a lead-off walk. Columbia

squared to bunt, hoping to move the lead runner into scoring position. A disaster looked imminent when Post 173's throw to first got away, but instead it turned into a blessing.

Post 173 quickly scrambled to get the loose ball, catching a Columbia runner straying too far from second. The throw to second ignited a rundown, with shortstop Hunter Adams finally getting the tag. As soon as he made the out, he noticed the second runner was stuck too far from first.

Another rundown ensued, again with Adams ending the pickle with a tagout.

"It was a huge turning point in the championship game," said Powers. "We end up with a double play while up two and their next batter hit a stand-up triple. We got out of the inning clean."

Continued on 2B



Dylan Ward is joined by Tennessee American Legion state director Rob Kohls after being named the tournament MVP. Ward will receive \$500 to go to his college education after graduating.



Members of the local Post 173 American Legion present the flags during the opening ceremony at the Tennessee state tournament. Post 173 will be presented the state championship banner later this week after the 17U team claimed the title Monday.

Youth Grillin' in McMinnville

(Part of Smokin in McMinnville)

Live cooking competition! Open to youth chefs ages 12-18

• 2 rounds of cooking • Mystery Ingredients • Televised Competition

Register before August 1 at the Civic Center • \$15 Entry Fee

Competition to be held behind the Civic Center

500 Garfield Street • McMinnville, TN • 931.473.1212

August 10 • 6pm

Parks and Recreation
McMinnville
WARREN COUNTY, TENNESSEE
See Natural!

26578