

GOLDEN TRANSCRIPT

Golden Junior Baseball wraps up Spring Season, Emphasizes Sportsmanship



As storm clouds roll in from the west June 14, Coach Jason Jumonville's 12U team practices at Ulysses Park. The Golden Junior Baseball Association was wrapping up its regular season June starting the week of June 19.
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With storm clouds rolling in over the foothills, everyone at Ulysses Park hoped the rain and lightning would hold off just long enough for the youngsters to finish their June 14 baseball game.

The North Jefferson Americans were enthusiastically cheering on their batting teammate, while their opponents — the Golden Taters — stayed focused on the next pitch and which direction the ball might go.

With a few lightning strikes visible on the horizon, the coaches ended the final inning slightly early, and the teams lined up to tell each other, "Good game."

As the Golden Taters came off the field, and a few raindrops started falling, Coach Russ Bailess asked his players what they learned from the game.

That was far more important than the final score.

This spring, 325 youngsters across 28 teams have been learning and applying the fundamentals of baseball and sportsmanship through the Golden Junior Baseball Association.

The league kicked off its spring season in March. Each team was scheduled to play 14 regular season games, but the recent rainy trend has made that tricky.

Depending on the age group, teams were wrapping up their regular seasons June 12-14, with playoffs starting the week of June 19.

Twelve-year-old Owen Nelson was excited to kick off the playoffs June 19, saying he felt good about his 12U team's — nicknamed the Golden Demons — chances.

Owen Nelson has played in the GJBA for four years, mostly with the same teammates. He's enjoyed seeing how everyone's gotten better over the years, saying he's made friends with other players and coaches.

"It feels like one big team," he said of the league.

Baseball's his favorite sport, he continued, describing how it helps with athleticism and hand-eye coordination. Owen Seymour and Sam Bailess, 10 and 11 respectively, play on the 11U Golden Taters.

During their five years playing baseball, the two said they and their teammates have learned all the sport's physical fundamentals — hitting, throwing and pitching. But they've also learned key emotional lessons, like not getting down on themselves after a bad play.

Bailess, Sam's dad and the Taters' coach, commended GJBA for giving children an opportunity to learn those things. He said that's part of his job as a volunteer coach — emphasizing having a good attitude and not letting the last play distract from the next one.

Jason McCullough, an assistant for Coach Jason Jumonville's 12U Golden Demons, and his family have been active in several baseball leagues over the years, and there's something unique about GJBA's culture that he appreciates.

"It's not about the wins and losses, but experience and attitude," McCullough said.

He believed that mentality was paying dividends for GJBA specifically and the Golden community's baseball culture in general.

Russ Bailess added how the league creates a sense of community, even among the players who don't live in Golden.

That was GJBA President Mike Griffeth's hope too. He said it wouldn't be possible without the support of several community partners and dozens of parents donating their time and resources to ensure the players learn the most fundamental lesson of all: "Always try your best."

Keywords

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