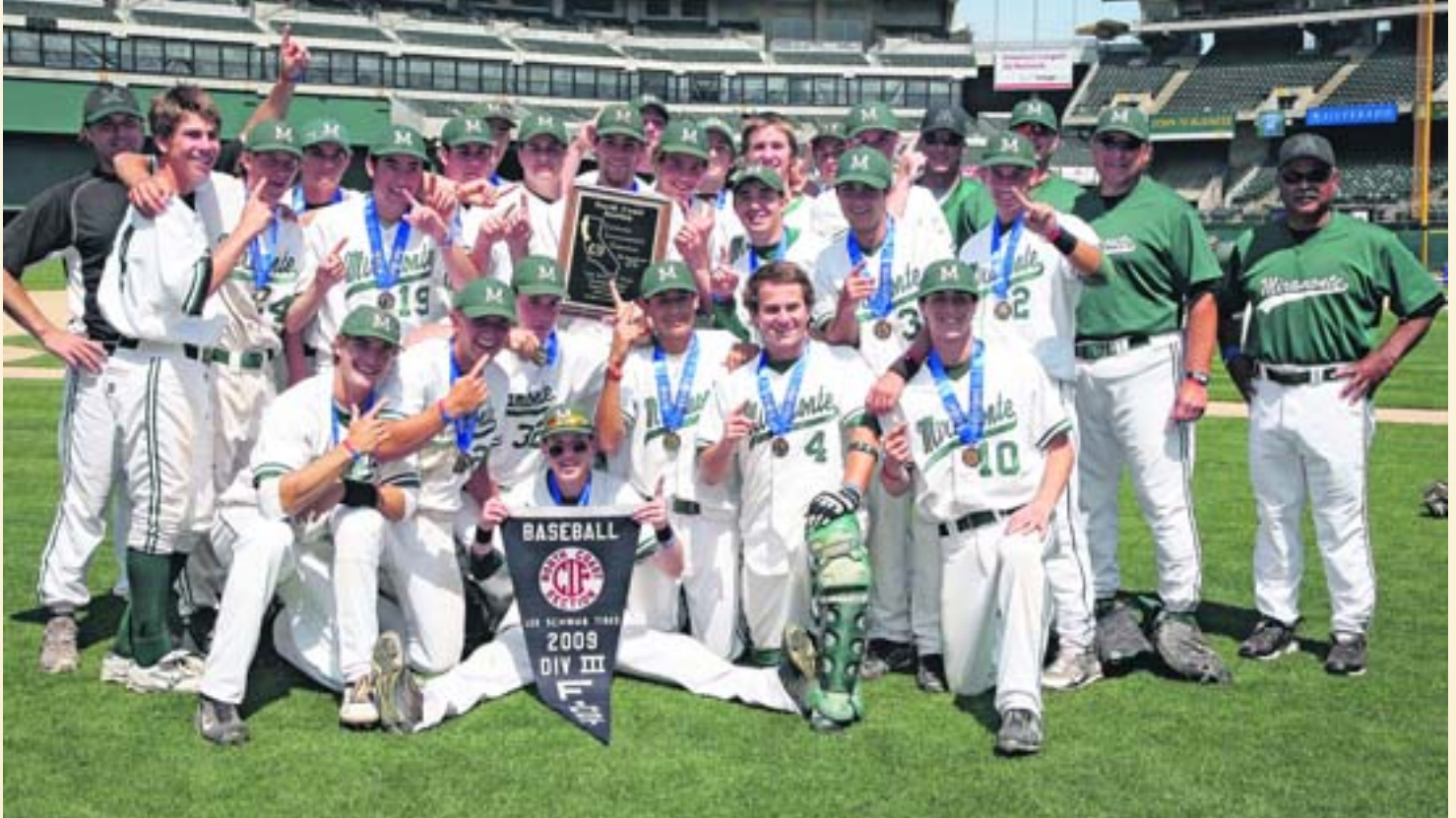


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Miramonte Wins 2009 North Coast Baseball Championship

By Kevin D. Shallat



2009 NCS Baseball Champions Miramonte Matadors Photo Jordan Fong

It was an emotional week for the Miramonte varsity baseball team going into the North Coast Section (NCS) Baseball Championship game on May 30, as well as a tough week for the school and community altogether. Merely one week earlier, Miramonte lost a student, Joseph Loudon, who was close to some of the players on the team. The players had to deal with some very real life occurrences that make the idea of sport seem less important. However, the players had a game to play. "Joe (Loudon) was at our game on Friday, right before he passed. That kind of made us realize that what we were doing was more important than just for ourselves, it was for the community. It made us play with a little bit of purpose, and lot of togetherness," said shortstop Mike Reuvakamp.

For Miramonte Head Coach Vince Dell 'Aquila, competing in an NCS championship game was nothing new. He had coached the 1999 and 2002 championship teams that played at the Oakland Coliseum, as well as the 2004 and 2005 teams that won it all as well. The 2009 team had earned a 20-3-1 record to advance to the NCS Championship game at the Oakland Coliseum against the Sir Francis Drake Pirates (20-5).

But for the players, who have never experienced the loss of a friend, to play in a big league ballpark, or compete in a state championship game, this was all new to them. Behind a masterful performance from their starting pitcher, Miramonte pulled off a 1-0 victory to record their fifth NCS championship in 10 years.

Despite being the one seed, the Matadors lost the coin toss and had to accept the visiting team designation. This, as it turned out, was a blessing in disguise, as the Matadors displayed some early pop with their bats. Miramonte's Kevin Paulsen led off the first inning with a base hit to left and advanced to second on a passed ball. The next batter was Reuvakamp, who scorched a grounder up the middle that caromed off of the pitcher's leg to score Paulsen from second. The atmosphere in the dugout and stands became loud with an anticipation of more runs, but the game was destined for a pitcher's duel.

The Pirates gave the Matadors a scare in the bottom of the first, as they looked to answer right back in the same fashion. Drake's number two hitter advanced to second after an infield hit, but after their cleanup hitter walked, their number five hitter struck out to end the threat.

Miramonte's starting pitcher, senior Andrew Kjar, was brilliant. His slider baffled and neutralized hitters all day. "I feel most comfortable with it (the slider), it's just like a fastball until the last second when you need to break your wrist to get the movement on it," said Kjar. After getting the cleanup hitter to pop out to end the third inning, it was pretty much smooth sailing from then on. Kjar wound up throwing a three-hit complete game shutout to seal the NCS championship by a score of 1-0.

"I'm really proud of the boys, because of what they've been through all week. Their heads and hearts were in other places, but they did it. They did it!" said Coach Dell 'Aquila.



Andrew Kjar (34) and Kevin Paulsen (4) pound it after a great inning Photo Jordan Fong



Mike Reuvekamp (1) gets a laugh with teammates during the second inning



Kevin Paulsen rounds third base to score after a single by Mike Reuvekamp in the first inning

Photos Jordan Fong

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