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OBA Orinda Spartans 11U Advances to PONY Baseball Regional Tournament

Submitted by Sandra McGonigle (written by Skip Tague)

For the first time in memory, Orinda played host to a PONY youth baseball sanctioned "Sectional" Tournament in early July at Wagner Ranch's Bronco Field.

On Thursday July 8, The Orinda Spartans 11U team, managed by Skip Tague, began the double-elimination PONY Sectional Tournament with a tough game against a strong Bel Passi team from Modesto. Bel Passi took the lead 2-0 in the top of the first and never gave it up, going on to beat the Spartans 10-5.

The loss pushed the Spartans into the loser's bracket where they were matched up against Moraga on Saturday morning, July 10. The Spartans scored two in the bottom of the first when Tim Tague tripled. Tague then scored on an errant pickoff throw. Moraga scored one in the top of the third. That would be all the offense they could muster against the Spartan pitching trio of Nick Foster, Sam Foster and Nolan Brown. The Spartans scored six in the fourth. The final score was 11-1.

The win led to a rematch the same afternoon against Bel Passi, who had just come off a tough loss to powerhouse Vacaville. A leadoff walk in the top of the first turned into a quick Orinda run, but that would be all for a few innings. With the Spartans down 2-1 in the bottom of the fifth, Orinda came alive as Jimmy Ricksen and Foster drew one-out walks. A series of nice plays led to a 5-2 Spartan lead. Orinda held on to win, 6-2.

Back Row (L-R) Coach Jeff Schwarz, Coach John McGonigle, Scotty Wu, Jackson Braitberg, Manager Skip Tague, Pat Hallahan Front Row (L-R) Jimmy Ricksen, Nick Foster, Shane Dalton, Sam Foster, Casey McGonigle, Griffing Schwarz, Nolan Brown, Tim Tague (not pictured Cole Bamberger) Photo Sandra McGonigle

The victory over Bel Passi earned the Spartans a date in the Championships Sunday morning against Vacaville. Orinda retired Vacaville on four pitches in the top of the first. However, Vacaville led off the second with four straight singles. Vacaville had 10 hits that inning and managed to put 13 runners across the plate.

Orinda dug in to battle, scoring one run in the second and two in the third. Pat Hallahan led off the fourth with a solid line drive single to center. That ignited the Spartan offense and they scored four that inning. After four innings, it was Vacaville 13, Orinda 7. The Spartans ran out of steam, only managing one more run on a Tague ground-rule double in the sixth.

Despite the loss, the Spartans are still alive in the post-season and looking forward to representing Orinda and the East Bay Section in the Regional tournament in Brentwood on July 15.

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