

May 24

GIANTS' 2023 JOURNEY ENDS IN NCS SEMIS, 8-2

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants' winning 2023 campaign came to a close in Petaluma Wednesday, at the hands of the #1-seeded Gauchos of Casa Grande High School, who went on to win the NCS tournament, and who will head to the Northern California CIS tournament.

The Giants nearly took the early lead against Gaucho starter Austin Steeves, as second baseman Theo Trono led off the game with a single to right field, stealing second base right away. Third baseman Rex Solle followed by taking a Steeves fastball in the thigh, putting runners on first and second.

But Gaucho catcher J.T. Summers caught Trono at third on an attempted double steal, so when Steeves uncorked a wild pitch to Giants catcher Rory Coughlan, all the Giants got out of it was Solle's stroll to third. Steeves then fanned Coughlan to end the inning.

With two outs in their half of the 1st, the Gauchos drew first blood against Giants ace Rory Minty, as Summer blooped a ball into no-man's land - behind first base, just fair. Gaucho first baseman Alex Cruz then dropped another single into right, bringing center fielder Jeffrey Rice to the plate.

Minty and Rice locked up in a lengthy battle, but on the tenth pitch of the at-bat, Rice singled up the middle to score Summers, putting the Gauchos on the board, 1-0. Minty then struck out left fielder Jesse Calkin looking, retiring the side and limiting the damage.

The Giants went quietly in the top of the 2nd, save for a brief glimmer of hope when first baseman Ben Resnick looped a liner towards right field. Gaucho second baseman Danny Mercado caught up with the ball after a long run, diving on the grass for a remarkable catch.

The bottom of the second snowballed into the crookedest inning of the year for the Giants, and altered the outlook for the rest of the game. Gaucho DH Elijah Sullivan greeted Minty's first pitch of the frame with a single up the middle, moving to second on Mercado's sacrifice bunt, which Minty and Trono handled well for the first out of the inning. So far, not so bad.

The snowball started rolling on shortstop Jordan Giacomini's grounder in the hole. Solle, taking it on the big hop, bobbled the ball, then tried to swivel to third, where Giants shortstop Danil Wells was racing behind to cover. Wells, Sullivan and Solle's throw arrived at third simultaneously, resulting in a cloud of dust, and Wells upended but somehow holding the ball. The call looked like it could go either way, but unfortunately went against the Giants, putting runners on first and third with the top of the order coming up.

Energized, Steeves helped himself with a single up the middle to score Sullivan, whereupon Minty walked Gaucho right fielder Kalen Clemmens to load the bases. Summers and Cruz, happy to take their turns again, both singled, and all of the sudden the score was 5-0.

Never one to back down, Minty fanned Rice for the second out, but couldn't quite close out the Gauchos, walking Calkin to load the bases again, before Sullivan, batting around, tormented Minty a second time in the inning with a line drive to right field, scoring two more.

The Giants had a bead on the third out when Mercado grounded to Wells, who tried to go to second for the force, but threw low to a late-arriving Trono, sending the ball into right field and Calkin home to make it an even 8-0.

The Gauchos were even angling for more, as Giacomini singled to load the bases for Steeves, who launched a deep blast to right field. Shellshocked, Giants fans expected the worst, raising their eyes to the heavens as right fielder Jack Moseley hauled the ball in with his back to the wall, mercifully ending the inning.

Unexpectedly, with the score 8-0 after just two innings, it stayed that way for nearly the entirety of the game. The Giants put runners on here and there, but couldn't move any of them across.

In the top of the 5th, with Giants center fielder Gavin Soper on first, Trono scorched a ball near third which looked bound to go for extra bases. But Gaucho Wyatt Abramson, playing the line, reached low across his body to pluck the ball from the air, then fired across to first before Soper even had a chance to turn around, doubling him off and ending the inning.

Likewise, the Giants hit into more hard luck in the top of the 6th, as they looked to tee off on Gaucho reliever Brady Laubscher. Leading off, Wells was robbed in right center by Clemmens, who hung onto the ball after falling forward in a frightening near-collision with Rice.

Solle followed with a sizzler that his counterpart, Abramson, couldn't handle, bringing up Coughlan, who smashed another liner, this time up the middle. Mercado, moving to his right, snatched the ball near the ground, wheeling to first and doubling off Solle, who swore that the ball hit the ground and was trapped by Mercado, and thus was just a simple force at first. Mercado had been too late to make a play on Solle in any case. Solle remained on second as the coaches and umps talked it over, but in the end the call stood, and the Giants had been doubled off to retire the side for two innings in a row.

Meanwhile, Giants reliever Chas Veley had been enjoying unexpected success against the hot Gaucho bats. Brought in to start the 3rd after the second-inning snowball, Veley faced the heart of the Gaucho order, striking out Clemmens and Rice, and limiting Summers and Cruz to a walk and groundout, respectively.

In fact, over four innings pitched, Veley allowed no runs on one hit, striking out four and walking three, quite a contrast to the start of the game, and a welcome break for the scorekeepers. The

Giants defense helped out as well, with Solle racing back along the left field line for a dazzling over-the-shoulder catch of Sullivan's popup in the bottom of the 4th.

In the top of the 7th, the Giants loaded the bases, starting with Resnick's second plunking of the game (and tenth of the year), followed by a single, fielder's choice and walk. Down to their last out of the season, the Giants avoided a shutout when Giacomini fielded Trono's grounder, but threw the potential game-ending out in the dirt past Cruz, scoring Resnick and Moseley, and making the score 8-2.

That was it, though, as Giacomini got another chance on Wells's grounder, sending this one across accurately enough to end the game.

The Giants close out their season 19-9, having placed second in the MCAL during the regular season, and making it to the semifinals of the NCS, by all accounts exceeding expectations for the season, and setting the table for a successful 2024.

Coughlan ends the year leading the team in batting average, at .342, followed by Solle at .337 and Tyler Sofnas at .327 (Veley had .333, but with only 3 at-bats). Of their 209 hits on the year, almost 90% were singles, making their winning percentage all the more impressive, and proving the necessity of disciplined play and tight defense, as they eked out the majority of their wins with smallball.

On the mound, Minty finished the year 10-2, with 82 strikeouts to just 13 walks, and was named MCAL Pitcher of the Year, leading the MCAL in wins, and tying RJ Meyn of De la Salle for first in the NCS. Contrary to Meyn, though, who doesn't bat or play another position, Minty led the Giants at the plate in on-base percentage, at .457, and played an outstanding first base throughout the year, with a fielding percentage of .951.

Solle, meanwhile, struck out 110 batters to lead the MCAL, with an ERA of 1.24 to Minty's 1.28. Minty's 82 strikeouts ranked #2 in the MCAL, while the #3 pitcher, Kaiden Dossa of Tam, sat far behind at 69. Solle was also named First Team All-MCAL, both as a pitcher and an infielder.

Theo Trono was named to the Second Team All-MCAL infield, while Jack Moseley was given Honorable Mention as an outfielder.

The staff at the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants Journalism Department wishes all players, coaches and parents a happy and healthy offseason, and looks forward to the Giants' continued success in 2024.

May 20

REDWOOD ROUTS UKIAH 8-4, ADVANCES TO NCS SEMIS

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants traveled north on Saturday to Anton Stadium in Ukiah (Mendocino County), where they scored early and often, jumping out to an 8-0 lead over the Ukiah Wildcats after 5 ½ innings. Giants starter Rex Solle was dominant over his 6 2/3 innings, fanning 13 with just two walks, while scattering four hits.

Giants second baseman Theo Trono led off the game with a seeing-eye grounder in the hole, coming around to score on a blast by Solle off of the left-field fence. Wildcat left fielder Hunter Schnitzius crashed into the fence going for the ball, enabling Solle to waltz into third with a triple.

Giants catcher Rory Coughlan followed with his second beautiful squeeze bunt in two games, scoring Solle to put the Giants in front 2-0.

The Giants seemed to make good contact all day long, with just two strikeouts in five innings against Wildcat starter Cannon Johnson (his real name, not a pitching nickname). Shortstop Danil Wells had particular success on the day, with two line-drive singles for three RBIs, and another ball hit to the warning track.

In the top of the 5th, the Giants came alive again. With one out, pinch hitter Ben Resnick walked, with center fielder Gavin Soper coming in to pinch-run. The speedy Soper came around to score on a long, curving triple into the right field corner by Giants left fielder Sam Gersch. Then a Trono walk put runners on first and third, setting Wells up for one of his RBIs on a shot up the middle.

With Solle at the plate, Trono was caught at third on an attempted double-steal, leaving two outs and Wells on second. A Solle foul tip caught Wildcat catcher Canyon Loflin in a sensitive spot, causing Loflin to stagger four steps, loosen his belt, then fall to the ground and roll over. After five minutes, Loflin returned to the game to a round of sympathetic applause.

Solle, unimpressed, topped a slow roller to short, which got caught up in the infield grass. Wildcat shortstop Nate Looney, charging, threw the ball past first baseman Kessler Koch, scoring Wells and advancing Solle to second. The Giants were now up 5-0.

The Giants tacked on three more in the 6th, starting with first baseman Rory Minty taking a fastball in the thigh from sidearm Wildcat reliever Nate Hoben. Quinn Miller came on to run for Minty, and promptly stole second base. Designated hitter Matthew Knauer slapped a single up the middle to score Miller, whereupon Hoben walked Soper and Gersch, and was pulled with the bases loaded and just one out.

Wildcat center fielder Takota Newman trotted in to assume mound duties, and got Trono swinging on a high fastball. But he couldn't stop Wells, who cranked a line drive over Looney's head to score both Knauer and Soper, making it 8-0 Giants.

Wells sneaked into second on Schnitzius' throw, at which point Gersch took off from third, trying to make it 9-0. The throw from Wildcat second baseman Trenton Ford was high and up the line, and Gersch probably could have scored with a regular slide. But Gersch was stymied by Loflin's leap for the throw, which landed him right in the basepath, resulting in a standing collision, and the end of the inning.

Ford scored Ukiah's first run in the bottom of the 6th, reaching base on a leadoff walk, then second on a passed ball. A single up the middle by designated hitter Luke Schat put the Wildcats on the board.

Solle started off the bottom of the 7th at his best, fanning Looney and new first baseman Nick Avalos for his 12th and 13th strikeouts of the game. But with a single up the middle from Newman, and a walk to Schnitzius, Solle was just about out of pitches, and was pulled at 107 by Head Coach Mike Firenzi, in favor of junior right-hander Max Paul.

Paul, recently recovered from an injury to his throwing shoulder, induced some anxiety when he plunked Ford on his first pitch to load the bases, only to have Wildcat third baseman Trevor Schlafer clear them again with a double into the gap in right center.

Turning the page quickly, though, Paul bore down to strike Schat out swinging to end the game with the Giants still on top by a healthy 8-4 margin.

With the win, the Giants move to 19-8 on the year, and advance to the NCS semifinals on Wednesday against the top-ranked Casa Grande Gauchos of Petaluma, who defeated Redwood antagonist San Marin on Saturday, 4-2. The Giants can expect to see Gauchos ace Austin Steeves, who struck out 12 Northgate Broncos in the first playoff round, firing a complete-game 3-hitter to win 3-0.

The Giants managed 4 hits in 4 innings against Steeves in an early-season 6-4 loss to the Gauchos, outhitting them on the day 8-5. Only 2 of the Gaucho runs were earned during that game, as Redwood pitchers issued a total of 9 walks and hit 4 batsmen. Additionally, two of the Gaucho runs were attributable to a single Redwood error. Presumably, both teams have improved since then.

That game was also memorable for the Gaucho coach, who argued (among other things) that the game should be called for darkness after six innings. To see the writeup, go [HERE](#) and scroll down to March 4.

MAY 17

REDWOOD RALLIES OVER LIVERMORE FOR AN NCS PLAYOFF WIN

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants nearly gave away the farm on Wednesday to the Livermore Cowboys, but decided to extend their season with a ferocious rally, emerging victorious 6-3, and advancing in the North Coast Sectional playoffs.

After posting a 5-5 record over their last 10 regular season games, then bowing out of the MCAL playoffs on a heartbreaking 7th inning San Marin home run, the Giants were due for some magic.

After the top of the 3rd though, it looked like they might be waiting until next year. Senior southpaw Rory Minty, locked in a scoreless tie with Cowpoke CJ Johnston, started the inning by deflecting Pokes DH AJ Cook's grounder towards second base, where Giant Theo Trono raced in for a perfect off-balance throw to get out #1. Energized, Minty fanned Johnston for the second out. But then the wheels fell off.

Although Pokes shortstop Bobby Alvear slapped a single through Minty's legs, the damage seemed contained when Pokes third baseman Ray Castillo hit a routine grounder to his counterpart Rex Solle. Solle's throw, however, was in the dirt, and eluded Giants first baseman Ben Resnick's attempted scoop. With two outs and Alvear running, there were now Pokes on first and third.

Right fielder Andrew Arante followed with a grounder in the hole. Giants shortstop Danil Wells gloved it with a tremendous dive, then, desperate for the third out, rushed a throw to second, hurling the ball into right field. Alvear had already scored, and now there were runners on second and third.

Next up, Pokes first baseman Dom Shepard generated a cruel replay, sending another grounder into the hole, which Wells corralled with another tremendous backhanded dive. Without a force option, Wells elected to go to third, but again threw the ball away, scoring both runners, and running the score to 3-0 (all runs unearned).

Redwood fans sat stunned. If Wells, a rock-solid Golden Glover throughout the year, was cratering, then the team and season were certainly lost, weren't they? Fortunately, Minty fanned Pokes center fielder Justin Matchett, giving the Giants a chance to get off the field and think about it.

By the bottom of the 5th, they had decided to fight back.

Designated hitter Matthew Knauer led off with a hot grounder off of Castillo's chest. Quinn Miller came in to run for Knauer, moving to second on a single to left by left fielder Sam Gersch. A walk to Trono then loaded the bases for... Wells.

Jumping at the chance to make amends, Wells looped a sinking line drive into the gap in left center. Matchett dived, but watched it bounce past him, scoring Miller and Gersch, and sending Trono to third. Wells stood, elated, on second, beating his chest in exultation, as a weight seemed lifted from the collective shoulders of the team. The score was 3-2.

The Cowboys elected to intentionally walk Solle to load the bases again, this time for cleanup hitter and catcher Rory Coughlan. Coughlan surprised the Pokes with a beautiful squeeze bunt, scoring Trono to tie the game, and keeping the bases loaded. First baseman Shepard was caught so off-guard by the bunt that he didn't even make it back to the base to take Johnston's throw.

With Minty up, a shaky Johnston let loose a wild pitch to score Solle, giving Redwood the lead for the first time, 4-3. Not satisfied, Minty lined a single up the middle to score Wells, then right fielder Jack Moseley clubbed a single to left to score Coughlan. Livermore finally yanked Johnston, but the damage was done. The Giants had pulled ahead 6-3, never to look back.

The Pokes didn't threaten again. In the top of the 6th, left fielder Hayden Druba did push a grounder past a diving Resnick, but Minty got Cook swinging on a changeup, then handled Johnston's sharp comebacker to retire the side. After his hard luck earlier in the game, it was especially satisfying for Minty to flick his glove down reflexively, and for Johnston's ball to snap straight into the pocket. It made a beautiful sound, and must have felt like justice.

The bottom of the 7th completed Wells's resurrection, as he opened the inning handling two tricky grounders with his typical flair. And for balance, offsetting the error which had started it all, Solle took a grounder near the base, firing all the way across the diamond to end the game.

With the win, the 5th-seeded Giants (now 18-8) move on in the NCS playoffs, traveling up to Ukiah on Saturday to face the 4th-seeded Wildcats, who beat Vintage of Napa 3-0. At 16-6 on the season, the Wildcats tied with Windsor for a distant second in the North Bay – Oak league, behind Cardinal Newman, who at 24-1 is the consensus top team in all of Northern California this year. In terms of common opponents during the year, the Giant and Wildcats both played and beat Analy, Montgomery, and Rancho Cotate.

May 2

REDWOOD CLAWS BACK TO TOP BULLS IN EIGHT, 5-4

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants fell behind 4-0 to the Branson Bulls at home on Tuesday, staying dormant until the 5th inning, then chipping away through seven to send the game to extras. Their improbable comeback was capped with a walkoff squib in the bottom of the 8th.

The Giants gifted the Bulls an early lead right away. Starter Rory Minty walked Bulls shortstop Cooper Tenney, then got left fielder Will Ashley to ground to shortstop Danil Wells. Wells bobbled the ball, then threw it into right field, putting runners on first and second with one out.

Minty snagged a comebacker on a big hop to get the second out 1-3, but now the runners were on second and third, with Bulls first baseman Kaden Gustafson coming to the plate. Gustafson sent a sinking line drive into center field, where Gavin Soper charged in, diving onto his belly for what seemed to be a spectacular inning-ending catch.

But Soper's fully-extended glove had only managed to trap the ball, and of course, with two outs the runners were going on contact, so - in this game of inches - instead of sitting down scoreless, the Bulls dugout was up celebrating Gustafson's two-run single. Branson 2, Giants 0.

The Giants couldn't get anything going against Bulls starter Wilson Wendt, perhaps distracted by Wendt's audible grunting on every pitch. While the Giants were indeed making good contact – Bulls pitching recorded just a single strikeout on the day – those balls seemed to be magnetically attracted to Branson outfielders. In fact, five of the first seven Giants batters flied out.

In the top of the 4th, Sam Gersch came into the game, and was immediately put to work, as Gustafson belted a double into the left field corner. Bulls catcher Luke Shane followed with a sinking liner to right that Jack Moseley plucked out of the air before it could cause any harm. Next up, right fielder Morris Jacoby slapped a hard grounder to the glove side of Giants third baseman Rex Solle, but in a tough break, Solle came up without the ball. Fortunately, Gustafson didn't advance, so now there were runners on first and second.

When Minty reached back to fan Bulls DH Grayson Roberts for out number two, it looked like the Giants might get out of the inning unscathed – even more so when pinch hitter Enrique Dominguez, representing the bottom of the Bulls' order, sent a bouncing ball up the first base line towards Harrison Lopic.

The baseball Gods clearly were not looking Redwood's way at that moment, as the ball took a freak bounce on the line, changing course to angle back towards second base, past the previously well-positioned Lopic. Now, instead of resting comfortably in the dugout, Minty faced the top of the order, with the bases full of Bulls.

Minty worked Bulls center fielder Noam Au Yeung to a full count, continuing to battle through three foul balls, until getting Au Yeung to hit the ball on the ground to second base. But in a sign of the Giants' bad juju du jour, the normally sure-handed Theo Trono flubbed the play. With the runners again going on contact, the error scored both Gustafson and Jacoby, making it 4-0 Bulls.

It looked like the damage might extend when Tenney followed with a line drive up the middle. Wells laid out behind second base for a spectacular grab, but the ball popped out when Wells, fully extended, hit the ground. There was momentary confusion while the ball lay on the ground, as Wells scrambled to his feet and both Trono and Au Yeung arrived in the vicinity of second base. Au Yeung was starting his slide, and seemed too close to make a play.

But in a heads-up move, Wells scooped up the ball and swiveled to third, where a curious Dominguez had wandered off the bag. Wells fired to Solle, who slapped a tag on Dominguez to put an end to the eventful inning.

The Giants finally got something going in the bottom of the 5th against Wendt, who started things off by handing Gersch a leadoff walk, then drilling Wells on a bunt attempt. Gersch stole third uncontested, as Bulls third baseman Liam Parrot was playing in for Wells's bunt, then scored on a ground ball to third by Trono.

Moseley followed with a single in the hole to put runners on first and third for Minty, who executed his end of a squeeze play, scoring Wells, and moving Moseley to third on the throw. When Wendt hit Solle to put runners on first and third, it signaled the end of his work for the day. Ashley moved in from left field to the mound for the Bulls, inheriting a 4-2 lead.

Solle quickly stole second, putting two runners in scoring position, and the sun began to poke through the clouds. Was the game turning Redwood's way? The crowd's hopes were lifted on a long fly ball to left center from Coughlan, but Au Yeung's running catch deflated them quickly, and ended the inning.

The Giants weren't done for the day quite yet, though. Designated hitter Matthew Knauer led off the bottom of the 6th by fighting off an inside fastball and dropping it into left field. When the ball rolled through Roberts' legs, Knauer wound up on second, and Roberts wound up on the bench, yanked immediately by his coach for the error.

Soper followed with a beautiful sacrifice bunt, sending Knauer to third, whereupon Gersch hammered a single to right, scoring Knauer and making the game 4-3 with only one out. Hey! The Giants might actually be back *in* this thing! The sun broke through again with Trono up and Gersch on 3rd, and again the crowd was stirred by a long fly ball – this time to right center – but again Au Yeung ranged back to the wall, and corralled it, retiring the side.

Meanwhile, Minty had only gotten stronger over the course of the game, allowing just six hits on the day, and no walks since the first inning. He retired the Bulls in order in the top of the 7th, finishing with 108 pitches, and bringing Redwood up for – ostensibly – their final at-bat.

Moseley led off the inning with a blistering shot right back between Ashley's knees. Protectively, Ashley reached down and was lucky to grab it for out number one. Perhaps a bit jostled, Ashley then walked Minty aboard. Jack Corvi came on to pinch run for Minty.

The speedy Corvi stole second, then took off on a Solle single in the hole. Even though the ball wasn't very deep into left field, Head Coach Mike Firenzi had no hesitation sending Corvi, perhaps the fastest player on the team, to try for the tying run. Roberts charged the ball, firing off a relay to Ashley, who wheeled and dealt a perfect throw to Shane at the plate. Boy, was it going to be close... Shane's tag came down onto Corvi's knee, but the ump, standing in great

position, called Corvi safe, ruling that his foot had touched the plate just prior to the tag. The game was tied 4-4!

Solle moved to second on the play, and Coughlan walked behind him, and with Knauer coming back up, the Giants were within a hair's breadth of walking the game off right then and there. But that would have been too easy. Knauer grounded into a 6-4-3 double-play, and as if that weren't bad enough, the field ump made a big deal about how the third out was **really** Coughlan, who he said had slid into second baseman Tom Lardner on the turn. Either way, the game was destined to go to extra innings.

Since Minty had used up his maximum pitch count for the day, Firenzi turned to reliever Chas Veley. Gustafson made things interesting, leading off with his third hit of the game, a seeing-eye grounder in the hole, bringing Shane to the plate. Liam Stewart came in for the Bulls to run for Gustafson.

Shane may have had the worst at-bat ever recorded in baseball history. First, he squared to bunt, and somehow managed to foul the ball off into his own face (fortunately, he was ok). Then, Shane struck out swinging on a hit and run as Stewart was trying to steal second. Demoralized by his strikeout, Shane put his head down and began to trudge back to the dugout, stepping right in front of Coughlan who was trying to throw down to second. The ball careened off of Shane's helmet and popped straight up into the air, and before it had even come down, the home plate ump was stepping out in front of it all, swiping one hand over the other to call interference. Both Shane and Stewart were out. The bases were clear.

Shane's at bat thus included the following: He was hit in the front of the head **and** in the back of the head. He struck out swinging **and** made two outs on the same pitch. The fortuitous turn of events left Veley only the task of retiring pinch hitter Charlie Zwibelman, which he did on a fly ball to Soper.

As the bottom of the 8th unfolded, the Giants' win was by no means assured. Soper led off by striking out swinging, before Gersch was hit by a pitch and took first. Attempting to sacrifice, Wells bunted underneath a ball, blooming it towards third with some serious backspin. Now it was Shane's turn to call interference, as he tripped over Wells while trying to reach the mini-pop. Even though the ball spun foul, the ump called Wells for not getting out of the way.

Even with two outs, though, Ashley was feeling the pressure, as he proceeded to hit Trono, then walked Moseley to load the bases. Minty then squibbed a grounder to Tenney at short. Leaning over as the ball was spinning away from him, Tenney tried to go to second for the force to retire the side. But his momentum carried him just a bit too far. Tenney's throw was high, pulling Lardner off the bag, as Moseley slid in safely, allowing Gersch to score the winning run. It wasn't pretty, but somehow, the Giants had pulled it off.

With the win, the Giants move to 17-6 on the year (12-3 MCAL). They maintain second place in the MCAL race, and are increasingly likely to host the first round playoff game against the #3 finisher, either Tam, San Marin, or Novato, all teams they've beaten twice this year.

The Giants match up again with the Bulls on Thursday, for their last game of the regular season. The MCAL playoffs begin next Tuesday.

April 28

REDWOOD HANGS ON TO TOP NOVATO, 2-1

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants rode the arm of starting pitcher Rex Solle to a 2-1 victory Friday over the Novato Hornets at Ed Salmina Field in Novato – a key victory in their stretch run to the MCAL playoffs. Overcoming a few potentially costly mistakes, and with just four hits on the day, the Giants came up with a pair of timely hits in the 7th, then held on by their fingernails to eke out the win.

The Giants got on the board right away against Novato's freshman starter JP Harmon, mostly due to Hornet errors. Left fielder Sam Gersch led off the game with a weak comebacker to Harmon for the first out. And when second baseman Theo Trono tapped an even weaker comebacker towards Harmon, it seemed that Giant bats would be impotent for the afternoon.

But the cherubic Harmon cut the Giants a break. Bending over halfheartedly towards Trono's dribbler, Harmon let it bounce off of his shin for an error, then paid little attention as Trono proceeded to steal second and third.

Solle followed with a grounder to shortstop Andy Gates, who threw the ball in the dirt to first baseman Hannes Gerber, allowing Trono to score, and putting the Giants on the board 1-0

The Hornets were nearly handed a gift in the bottom of the 2nd. Harmon led things off with a rake single on a good pitch from Solle, who responded by striking out left fielder Jacob Rabb and right fielder Nathan Dito. Second baseman Griffin Vorhaus also watched a tight curveball spin into the zone for strike three, and began walking dejectedly to the dugout, believing the side was retired.

But wait! The ump hadn't said anything. Was it possible he was calling the killer curve a ball? Yes, it was... and he had! Vorhaus returned to the box somewhat sheepishly. Reincarnated at the plate, Vorhaus crushed a pitch just foul outside the left field line, then blasted a long fly ball to the fence in right center. Thankfully, Giants right fielder Jack Moseley was able to get over there and haul it in.

The Hornets threatened in the bottom of the 3rd as well, not entirely on their own merit. Center fielder Dominic Scafani started things off with a nice bunt to the third base side, which Solle handled beautifully, setting his feet before delivering a strong throw to nip Scafani at first.

Gerber followed with a routine grounder to Giants shortstop Danil Wells, who took his time, underestimating Gerber's speed, and missing him at first unnecessarily. Giants catcher Rory Coughlan, eager to erase Gerber as a baserunner, instead advanced him to second, throwing wildly down to first on a snap pickoff attempt.

With the tying run now in scoring position, and only one out, Solle bore down to strike out Hornet catcher Evan Black, before getting third baseman Julian Oliver on a pop foul to first.

The Giants also shot themselves in the foot on the basepaths. In the top of the 4th, Solle reached on an error by Oliver, then moved to second on a grounder by Coughlan. With Minty up and one out, Solle was caught leaning by Harmon, who wheeled to second for the pickoff.

With one out in the top of the 5th, designated hitter Matt Knauer dropped a double just inside the right field line, but a Redwood scoring chance was again wasted when Harmon pulled the exact same move for the second straight inning, retiring Knauer and the side.

It looked like those would be Redwood's best scoring chances for the remainder of the day, as the Giants continued on empty, and found themselves down to their last out in the top of the 7th. Head Coach Mike Firenzi elected to pinch-hit Tyler Sofnas for Wells, and Sofnas made Firenzi look like a genius, hammering the first pitch he saw up the middle for a single.

Knauer, eager to make up for his baserunning faux pas in the 5th, reached up and slapped a high fastball down the left field line for his second consecutive double of the game, scoring Sofnas, and increasing Firenzi's genius aura for DH'ing Knauer in the first place. The score was now 2-0 Redwood.

Going into the bottom of the 7th, and having struck out 9 times already against Solle, the Hornets were searching for answers. After all, this was ostensibly the best lineup around, with a team batting average of .316, by far the highest in the MCAL (Redwood is 4th at .283).

Solle nearly handed them all the answers, opening the inning with six straight balls, and issuing his only walk of the day – to Gates – in the process. With the count 2-0, and the dangerous Harmon at the plate, Solle flipped a switch, battling back to a full count, then sitting Harmon down with a filthy curveball on the outside corner. One out – two to go.

Just when it seemed the momentum was swinging to a final downhill push for the Giants, Rabb sliced a single to right field. As Gates rounded second, Moseley charged the ball, focused on preparing for the throw to third. However, while glancing up at the runner, Moseley took his eye off the ball, which rolled right past him and to the fence.

Gates scored, making it 2-1, and Rabb easily cruised into third. Ay-yai-yai...The tying run was now on third, with only one out!

But once again, Solle came through, striking out Dito on another malicious curveball for out number two. And when Vorhaus sent a towering fly ball into shallow right field, Redwood fans closed their eyes and crossed their fingers. But it was Trono, ranging back onto the grass and calling off Moseley, who sealed the deal for the Giants, by a final score of 2-1.

With the win, the Giants move to 16-6 on the year (11-3 MCAL). In the MCAL standings, the Giants stay within a game of Marin Catholic (10-2), who have four games scheduled this week (home and away against both San Rafael and Archie Williams). The Giants also remain a game ahead of Tam (10-4), which closes its regular season this week home and away against San Marin (8-6).

With the loss, Novato (7-7) drops behind San Marin for the fourth and final spot in the MCAL playoffs, although that could change this week, with San Marin up against Tam, and Novato home and away against Terra Linda. The playoffs begin May 9, with a play-in game if necessary on May 6.

With 11 strikeouts in the game, Solle maintains his position atop the MCAL, with 84 Ks for the year (in 50 innings). Fellow Giant hurler Rory Minty holds the second spot with 67, while Rabb of Novato sits in a distant third place with 53.

The Giants close out their regular season next week against the Branson Bulls, hosting the Bulls on Tuesday, before traveling to Ross on Thursday. Tuesday is "Senior Night" for the Giants, and there will be a brief ceremony *before* the game, honoring our Redwood Giant seniors, and the parents who made them so.

April 25

REDWOOD, MINTY, REBOUND OVER NOVATO, 4-0

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants took a step in the right direction Tuesday, besting a competitive Novato Hornet team behind a complete game shutout by starting pitcher Rory Minty. Against a lineup boasting four of the top six hitters in the MCAL by batting average, Minty's line of seven strikeouts against six hits and zero walks looked all the more impressive.

The Hornets sent up starting pitcher Jacob Rabb, who came into the game second only to Minty in the MCAL in wins (7-1 Rabb vs 8-1 Minty). Coming off of a rough hitting patch – a major factor in dropping four of their previous five games - the Giants got on the board early against Rabb, then took advantage of their eight hits on the day to put the game out of reach.

The game started with some sting from the Hornets, as Catcher Evan Black led off with a sizzling grounder in the hole. Third baseman Rex Solle dived to his left for a highlight-reel snag, but his throw across to first baseman Ben Resnick was high enough to pull Resnick off the bag for the split-second that Black was crossing. The fact that there even was a play at first was a credit to Solle.

Next up, third baseman Julian Oliver wedged a soft liner buzzing with backspin just in front of second base, where it bit the ground and spun under the glove of charging shortstop Danil Wells, then proceeded to spin under the glove of second baseman Theo Trono for good measure. There were now runners on first and second with no outs. Were the Giants destined to be snake-bit throughout this game?

Thankfully, the answer was 'no,' as Minty got Hornet shortstop Andy Gates to line out to center fielder Gavin Soper, before retiring cleanup hitter and first baseman JP Harmon on a soft grounder to short. Wells combined with Trono to put the backspin debacle behind them and turn a solid 6-4-3 double play to end the inning; the Hornets hardly threatened after that.

Giants left fielder Sam Gersch led off the bottom of the 1st by topping Rabb's first pitch slowly towards second baseman Griffin Vorhaus, then beating out Vorhaus's rushed throw. Trono followed with a swinging sacrifice bunt to Harmon, moving Gersch to second.

Solle then lined a single to left, and rounded first in a big way, drawing a pickoff throw across from Oliver to Harmon, who wheeled to Vorhaus at second, just nabbing Solle for the second out. Head Coach Mike Firenzi had held Gersch at third, but sent him home on the play to second, with Gersch scoring just ahead of Vorhaus's subsequent throw to the plate. Sure, Solle had been picked, but the Giants were on the board early for a change!

In the top of the 4th, Harmon found Minty for a rocket to right, over the head of Giants right fielder Jack Moseley. Turned around by the blistering ball, Moseley's swiveled to try and track it, then lurched as his knee buckled underneath him. Staggering ahead, Moseley managed to thrust up his arm and get a glove on the ball, although he couldn't squeeze it home. The adventurous sequence resulted in a double for Harmon, and thankfully Moseley was uninjured.

Harmon continued to third on a sacrifice bunt by right fielder Nathan Dito, but that's as far as he got, as Minty bore down for two clutch strikeouts to get out of the inning.

The Giants added some insurance runs in the bottom of the 4th by stringing together some hits - a welcome sight for Giants fans. Solle started things off with a scorching ball over the bag at third for a double, then moved to third on a bunt single by catcher Rory Coughlan back to Rabb.

In a surprise move, Harmon (a freshman), who had wandered in for the bunt, and so was standing a good 10' in front of the bag, intercepted Rabb's throw to first (a throw which could have possibly retired Coughlan, since Vorhaus was covering on the play). It wasn't clear if Harmon wasn't aware of Vorhaus covering, or perhaps thought he might be able to pick Solle

off of third, or if this was simply a teaching moment for the freshman. In any case, Harmon just stood there with the ball, before handing it sheepishly back to Rabb.

Minty, next up, watched as Coughlan stole second on Rabb's first pitch. Rabb, evidently nonplussed by recent events, responded by unleashing a wild pitch, scoring Solle and sending Coughlan to third. Minty then added to Rabb's frustration with a Baltimore chop over the head of Vorhaus, scoring Coughlan, and making it 3-0 Giants.

Redwood squandered further opportunity in the inning, however, as Jack Corvi, pinch-running for Minty, was picked off on a close call at first. A Soper walk and a second Baltimore chop – this time from Resnick over shortstop Gates – would have scored Corvi, but at 3-0, Redwood fans counted their blessings.

The Giants added another run in the 6th, as Coughlan led things off with a 4-pitch walk. Wyatt Turkington, running for Coughlan, proceeded to steal second, advancing to third on a wild pitch. Minty followed with a slow roller to first which substitute Hannes Gerber handled, electing to go for the out and step on the bag, rather than coming home to prevent the run. Turkington graciously accepted Gerber's gift, rounding out the scoring at 4-0.

With the win, Redwood moves to 15-6 on the year (10-3 MCAL). The Giants remain in the second spot in the MCAL, a game behind Marin Catholic in the loss column (the Wildcats beat up on Terra Linda on Tuesday, 8-0) and a half-game ahead of Tam (which won a non-league contest on Monday).

Minty's record improves to 9-1, not only best in the MCAL, but best in the North Coast Section, and #3 in all of California.

The Giants travel to Novato Friday afternoon to face the Hornets again, before closing out their regular season next week against the Branson Bulls.

April 21

REDWOOD FALTERS LATE AGAINST MARIN CATHOLIC

It was a tale with two chapters Friday afternoon at Moody Field, as the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants and starting pitcher Rex Solle carried a riveting pitchers' duel into the 6th inning, then suddenly collapsed, surrendering both the lead and the game, 5-1. As a result, the teams flip-flopped in the MCAL standings, with the Wildcats assuming top spot based on percentage points.

Solle established dominance over the Wildcats early, striking out the side to open the game. As in some previous outings, Solle took an inning or so to find his control, walking two and throwing 27 pitches in the first frame, but then averaging under 12 pitches/inning for the next four innings, while striking out nine and allowing only one hit – a harmless single by Wildcat shortstop Carl Schmidt.

Meanwhile, the Giants were faring no better against Wildcat starter Gavin Simurdiak, managing no hits and only one baserunner through the first four innings. The game's most dramatic moment in the first hour and a half was in the top of the 4th, when a Solle fastball found its way through the glove of Giants catcher Rory Coughlan, clipping the home plate ump on the forearm, and causing a 5-minute delay while he tried to shake it off.

With one out in the bottom of the 5th, Giants designated hitter Matthew Knauer finally broke the drought with a line drive single to right, just over the glove of Wildcat second baseman Jude Baker. Center fielder Gavin Soper followed with a sharp grounder under the glove of first baseman Bruno Condit, sending Knauer to third.

Next up, Giants right fielder Jack Moseley pushed what looked to be a killer squeeze bunt attempt down the first base line, but a jaunty head-first slide by Knauer seemed wasted when the ball rolled foul. Fortunately, the sliding practice came in handy for Knauer when Moseley slugged the next pitch out to Wildcat left fielder Jayden Lee.

Tagging at third, Knauer bolted for home on the catch, testing Lee, who initiated a perfect relay through Schmidt to catcher Jake Lyall, who looked like he might have the goods on Knauer. But the second time sliding was a charm for Knauer, as he arrived head-first into Lyall's glove, dislodging the ball and taking the lead for the Giants, 1-0.

Back out to defend the lead, Solle started the 6th inning inauspiciously by drilling Wildcat leadoff hitter Maddox Thompson in the back. Schmidt then launched a monster blast to dead center that sent Soper back to the wall, where he squared up for the catch and out number one. Lee followed with a slow grounder to first which Minty realized he would have to take unassisted. Bobbling the ball momentarily as he glanced over at the runner, Minty quickly snatched the ball back out of the air and snapped an impatient tag onto Lee for the second out. It seemed the Giants were going to fight for this narrow advantage.

But with just one out to go, the air seemed to go out of Giant spirits when an apparent strike three to cleanup hitter Burnes was instead called a ball four, just high. Now, instead of the Wildcats sitting down, two runners were on, and Lyall was coming to the plate. Lyall, no doubt still irked from allowing the go-ahead run just five minutes ago, turned on an inside fastball and sent it screaming over third base, just fair, and clearly for extra bases. The Wildcat bench danced raucously as the ball bounced around in the corner, eluding left fielder Sam Gersch, and allowing both Thompson and Burnes to score, handing the lead back to Marin Catholic, 2-1.

Looking for insurance runs, the Wildcats sent in Bennett Hadd to run for Lyall at second. Now thoroughly rattled, Solle walked DH Ramon Estrada, then advanced both runners with a wild pitch. Baker then delivered a sharp single to left, scoring Hadd, making it 3-1, and finishing Solle's work for the day.

In something of a surprise, Coach Firenzi brought in senior Ben Resnick, who had seen occasional mound duty during the year, but who is not primarily a pitcher. Resnick continued the surprise by delivering a wild pitch as his first offering to third baseman Miguel Lopez, sending Estrada to third. To his credit, though, he then got Lopez to pop up to shortstop Danil Wells, bringing the painful inning to a close.

The Giants' top of the order couldn't muster any response whatsoever in the bottom of the 6th, going down quietly for what would be Simurdiak's last inning.

Resnick returned to the mound in the 7th, getting pinch-hitter Spencer Wheels on a towering popup in foul ground which Solle, now at third, plucked at the very edge of play, as it grazed along the side fence. Perhaps the Giants would get out of this inning more quickly than the last.

Sadly, that was not to be, as Resnick walked Maddox on a pitch behind his back, then drilled both Schmidt and Lee to load the bases. It seemed Resnick wasn't going to find the strike zone anytime soon, so, with the score still 3-1, and cleanup hitter Burnes coming up, Firenzi turned to junior Chas Veley.

Inheriting the unenviable situation of bases loaded with one out in the 7th, down narrowly to an arch-rival, with their top hitter at the plate, Veley continued the downward trend, walking Burns on four pitches, then Lyall on five, before settling down to strike out pinch-hitter LJ Smith, then getting Baker on a fielder's choice. The Giants had allowed two runs in the 7th on zero hits. In fact, the Wildcats had gotten their five runs on only three hits for the entire game.

As in their previous meeting, Schmidt came in to pitch the 7th inning for the Wildcats, and like the previous meeting, the Giants went down in order on his fastballs down the middle. Lopez, now moved over to short, laid out for Wells's soft line drive behind second base for the defensive play of the game, robbing Wells of what would have been the Giants' third hit for the day.

With the loss, the Giants move to 14-6 on the year (9-3 MCAL). The Wildcats (13-5, 8-2) take over the top spot in the MCAL on percentage points. The Wildcats have six MCAL games remaining, while the Giants have four. It's certainly possible – maybe even likely – that these two teams will meet again in the MCAL playoffs.

On Tuesday, the Giants kick off a home and away series with the surprising (13-6, 7-5) Novato Hornets, before closing out their regular season the following week against the Branson Bulls.

April 18

REDWOOD FALLS TO MARIN CATHOLIC, 3-0

A couple of big swings made all the difference on Tuesday as the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants were upended by their crosstown rivals the Marin Catholic Wildcats, in the opener of their critical two-game regular-season series.

The sun was shining brightly at Bishop Thomas A. Daly Field, as the Giants and Wildcats, standing at #1 and #2 in the MCAL respectively, got things going in front of a sizeable crowd. The Wildcats' behemoth starter, 6'7" Liam "LJ" Smith, seemed vulnerable early, as the Giants' top of the order - second baseman Theo Trono and third baseman Rex Solle – both hit the ball hard to Wildcat center fielder Maddox Thompson. Next up, Redwood starter Rory Minty drew a walk.

Giants catcher Rory Coughlan, batting in the cleanup spot, stood in and watched Smith's first pitch skip through the knees of Wildcat catcher Jake Lyalls. Minty hadn't been going on the pitch, but took off from first as soon as he saw the passed ball. Lyalls, seemingly employing a familiar homefield trick, spun and immediately took the ball off the carom from the all-too-near backstop, delivering a perfect strike to Wildcat shortstop Carl Schmidt, who dropped a feisty tag on Minty to retire the side and leave Coughlan hanging. Apparently, nothing would come easily for the Giants today.

Both teams' bats stayed quiet until the bottom of the 2nd, when right fielder Brad Burnes led things off for the Wildcats. With the infield playing back, Burnes popped a high foul ball on the first base side which looked like it might *just* stay in play over by the Wildcat dugout. Giants first baseman Ben Resnick, after a long run over, dived dangerously in the area as the ball came down, but couldn't make the play.

A minute later, he probably wished he had, as Burnes lofted the very next pitch high in the air toward the left field foul pole. Giants left fielder Tyler Sofnas sized it up, looking like he would make a play, but ran out of room against the 300' sign as the ball just cleared the wall – the first home run of any kind against the Giants in 19 games this year. As an aside, trusted sources allege that that wall stands only 285' from home plate, but the 300' sign was created by the Wildcats as a size inflation intimidation tactic.

After Burnes's successive balls along the left and right field lines, the Wildcats began hitting Minty up the middle. Lyall hit a deep fly to center which Gavin Soper corralled, followed by Smith, who smacked a single back through the middle, nearly knocking Minty's hat off.

Wildcat DH Spencer Wheels followed with a ball in nearly the same spot, but this time, Giants shortstop Danil Wells was playing him a step closer up the middle. Wells laid out – his glove nearly touching second base – for a spectacular catch on Wheels, then hopped up to try and double Smith off at first.

Wells's throw skipped past Resnick and into the Wildcat dugout and out of play, just as Smith was arriving back to first. After some confusion on the field, the umpires awarded Smith two

bases, waving him to third amid howls of protest from the Redwood side. The call seemed excessive.

However, a quick check of the rules (at umpirebible.com) confirms that – on an initial throw out of play from the infield - the runner should be awarded two bases from where he started on the pitch. In any case, the Giants seemed threatened with Smith on third, and the Wildcats hitting Minty well.

Wildcat second baseman Jude Baker, next up, hit another ball back up the middle – a looping line drive over second base which Wells intercepted with a running leap, pulling Minty and the Giants out of the inning.

The Giants couldn't respond in their next at-bat, nor most of the game, as they repeatedly hit the ball softly to the left side or back to the pitcher for easy outs (a total of 13 times in the game).

The Wildcats threatened again in the bottom of the 3rd, with the help of another odd call. Third baseman Miguel Lopez led off with a flare into left field, just over Wells's outstretched glove (a rare ball which Wells couldn't reach), followed by Thompson taking a Minty curveball on the wrist, putting runners on first and second with no outs.

Schmidt then topped a grounder to Wells for the force at second, but was called safe at first, as Resnick couldn't handle Trono's throw, putting runners on first and third with one out. But wait – had Schmidt just run into Resnick and interfered with the play? If that were the case, Schmidt should be out. Head Coach Mike Firenzi came out to discuss with the umpires, as it seemed that it was Schmidt's obligation to avoid Resnick on the play. However, each umpire told Firenzi to ask the other, and neither wanted to make that judgement, which left the Redwood side frustrated, with only one out and the dangerous Wildcat hitters left fielder Jayden Lee and Burnes coming to bat.

Lee did hit the ball hard up the middle, but fortunately within Wells's range, for another exciting pick that normally would have scored Lopez, but instead held both runners. Energized by the support behind him, Minty then bore down and fanned Burnes on a high fastball, retiring the side to huge cheers from the Giants fans, and keeping the score 1-0.

The Giants finally got something going with one out in the top of the 4th, as Smith walked Minty again, and Coughlan pushed him forward with a line drive single to right field. Wells followed with what looked like a beautiful sacrifice bunt out in front of the plate, advancing the runners to second and third. But it did seem a curious call to sacrifice with one out.

Turns out that Firenzi had called on Wells, one of the best bunters on a team full of them, to drag a bunt for a hit, and that "beautiful sacrifice" bunt had been merely a missed execution. Smith then fanned Giants right fielder Jack Moseley to quash the rally and retire the side.

The Giants had a moment in the top of the 5th, when Sofnas' squib, rolling like a bunt along the third base line, began to turn foul, then *decided to reverse course* as it reached the line. Lopez stood over the ball in disbelief, as it settled in fair territory, well after Sofnas had already crossed first base. The reversal seemed an omen that the game was turning the Giants' way, but alas, two more weak grounders and a strikeout couldn't score Sofnas in the inning.

The Wildcats padded their lead in the bottom of the 5th. Lopez, still irked by the lack of cooperation from the left field line, dropped his own ball down the right field line, where Moseley made a great play to race over and hold him to a single. Thompson then raked a single to center field, putting runners on first and second with no outs. Sensing opportunity, the Wildcats sent speedy Bennett Hadd in to run for Lopez. The score was still 1-0.

Minty, under pressure again, battled Schmidt to a full count, while Schmidt was fouling off pitch after pitch (six in total). On the eleventh pitch of the at-bat, Schmidt blasted a ball up against the left-center field wall. Sam Gersch, now in for Sofnas, chased the ball down and started a textbook relay to the plate. Hadd had scored, but there was still a chance to catch Thompson.

The play was close, and Wells's throw was on the money. But as Thompson slid, and Coughlan's tag came down, the ball appeared on the ground just behind the plate. Thompson had either been a hair ahead of the tag, or he had kicked it out of Coughlan's glove, but either way, the run scored, and the Wildcats were now up 3-0, with no outs and the heart of their order coming up.

Riled up now, Minty got Lee on a shallow popup to Soper, then fanned Burnes and Lyalls in quick succession to end the inning. It was an impressive display, but the damage had been done. Giants bats never did come alive, even in the 7th when Smith gave way to Schmidt on the mound. Schmidt, serving up nothing but center-cut fastballs, got two weak comebackers and a grounder to 3rd to close out the game. Somehow fittingly, yet annoyingly to Redwood fans, it was Burnes, who had started the scoring with his 286' home run, then moved in to third with the pitching change, who handled the last out of the game.

The Giants get another crack at the Wildcats at home on Friday, before kicking off their home and away series with the Novato Hornets next Tuesday.

With the loss, the Giants move to 14-5 on the year (9-2 MCAL). They maintain a 1-game lead over the Wildcats (7-2) in the MCAL standings. Minty suffered the first loss of his outstanding senior campaign, and is now at 8-1 for the year.

April 13

REDWOOD STRONG-ARMS TERRA LINDA, 6-2

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants fell behind early to an improved home-field version of the Terra Linda Trojans, but came back in the 3rd inning and eventually pulled away, sweeping their

season series and remaining atop the MCAL with six games to play. The final score of 6-2 seemed close, given the Giants' 14-0 pummeling of the Trojans the prior week at Redwood.

Today, traveling to a breezy San Rafael, the Giants took some time to solve 6'7" Trojan starting pitcher Miles Finn, going down in order to start the game. Meanwhile, the surprising Trojans got to Giants starter Rory Minty early. Although Minty finished his 5 2/3 innings with a typically polished line of three hits and eight strikeouts to just one walk, his one walk was to the second batter of the game, Trojan second baseman Si Eon Davis.

First baseman Ben Butler followed Davis with a laser all the way into the right field corner, bouncing up alongside the 290' sign, and putting runners on second and third. Then Trojan catcher Leon Cervantes smacked a comebacker along the ground to Minty's glove side. Minty slowed the ball enough that Giants shortstop Danil Wells had to charge in to try for a play at the plate. But the ball sneaked under his glove too, allowing Davis to score, and putting the Trojans on the board 1-0. And there was only one out... in the first inning! What in heck was going on?

The Trojans plated another run on shortstop Hayden Biesiadecki's grounder to first, doubling the insult to 2-0. Fortunately, Minty and the Giants defense tightened up for the rest of the game, and the universe returned to normalcy.

Giants catcher Rory Coughlan led off the top of the 2nd with a sharp grounder booted by Biesiadecki, moving to second on Minty's sacrifice bunt, and then to third on a wild pitch. Right fielder Jack Moseley then slapped a ball up the middle right through Finn's lanky legs, scoring Coughlan, and halving the deficit to 2-1.

In the top of the 3rd, left fielder Tyler Sofnas led off with a shot past third base for a single, followed by second baseman Theo Trono's filthy unplayable bunt down the third base line. Wells then cranked a grounder to his counterpart Biesiadecki, who let it squirt out into center field for his second error of the game, scoring Sofnas, and evening the score at 2-2, with Wells taking second base on the throw.

With runners on second and third and one out, Coughlan ripped a dangerous ball down to Trojan third baseman Nate Combrink, who was able to glove it and hold the runners while throwing across for out number two. But two pitches later, with Minty standing in, Finn flung a wild pitch to score Trono and hand Redwood the lead for good, 3-2.

The Giants added a run in the top of the 5th, when Coughlan hit the ball hard for his third at-bat in a row, scoring third baseman Rex Solle, who had reached earlier on a single.

With the score 4-2 in the top of the 6th, Finn began to flag, walking Moseley and giving way to reliever Luca Benassini. Benassini fared no better, walking center fielder Gavin Soper, then uncorking a wild pitch to put runners on second and third with no outs.

Sensing the Trojans on the ropes, Giants Head Coach Mike Firenzi called for a squeeze play with Sofnas at bat. But the play didn't quite go to plan. With Moseley barreling home, Benassini let fly what might have turned out to be his second wild pitch in a row, a good 18 inches off the plate. Sofnas, with an obligation to bunt and protect the runner, lunged for the ball, ticking it foul.

As Sofnas and Mosely started to return to their places, the home plate umpire started gesturing, and directed Sofnas off the field. His claim was that Sofnas, in lunging for the bunt, had stepped out of the batter's box, and therefore was automatically out on the first pitch he had seen, and a terrible pitch at that.

The Giants made better use of Benassini's wild pitches in the top of the 7th, as Solle led off absorbing one of them to take first base, then advancing to second and then third on two more. Eager to find a pitch to hit, the red-hot Coughlan powered the first strike he saw over the 325' sign in left field for Redwood's second home run of the entire year, scoring Solle and making it 6-2. Ironically, though a strong breeze had been blowing out to left the entire day, the wind stopped during Coughlan's at-bat, noticeably resuming shortly thereafter. That ball had left the park unaided, fueled by pure Giant power.

Meanwhile, Firenzi had decided to rest Minty's arm at 85 pitches, bringing in junior right-hander Chas Veley with two outs in the bottom of the 6th. Veley looked good, fooling Biasiedeki badly on a curveball to retire the side.

Finn, who had moved over to first for the Trojans, led off the bottom of the 7th with a slow roller in the hole. Wells raced over to grab it with a sweet backhand, nipping Finn courtesy of a superstar scoop by first baseman Ben Resnick. That was it for Terra Linda, who, after that early scare, had managed just three more baserunners on the day.

With the win, the Giants move to 14-4 on the year (9-1 MCAL), and prepare to face their rivals the Marin Catholic Wildcats, who currently stand at second place in the MCAL at 6-2 (11-5 overall). The Giants will visit MC on Tuesday in Kentfield, before returning the favor on Friday.

Minty continues his perfect season, with a record of 8-0, and 55 strikeouts against just 9 walks. Coughlan retakes the team lead in batting, edging Solle at .383 to .382, with Moseley now rising to .342 and Sofnas to .341 (despite that questionable batter's box call). With 18 of 24 games complete, the Giants are now exactly 75% of the way through their 2023 regular season.

April 8

REDWOOD UNRAVELS TO CLOSE OUT TOURNAMENT PLAY, 14-9

Pitching depth became an issue on both sides today, as the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants fell to the College Park Falcons of Pleasant Hill, 14-9, on the third and final day of the Service Champions Classic Tournament at Foothill High School in Pleasanton. Up early 2-0, the Giants allowed three or more runs in four straight innings to hand the game to the Falcons, who were arguably the weakest of the three tournament teams the Giants faced.

The day started out brilliantly for the Giants, as second baseman Theo Trono led off the game with a rope down the right field line for a double, coming in to score immediately on third baseman Rex Solle's sacrifice bunt. Falcon catcher Sean McGinty threw the ball away at first, and the ever-alert Trono came in just ahead of the tag.

The Giants added another run in the top of the 2nd, built around infield hits by catcher Rory Coughlan and DH Jack Corvi. Pinch-runner Sam Gersch, running for Coughlan, stole second, advanced to third on Corvi's grounder, then broke for home after Corvi stole second, and the Falcons mishandled the throw.

Meanwhile, Giants starting pitcher Chas Veley was running hot and cold, loading the bases in the first, then easily dispatching the Falcons in the second. In the bottom of the 3rd, Veley had given up a run on a hit batsman and single, when he was pulled with two outs after hitting his second batter of the inning. The score stood at 2-1 Giants.

Inheriting runners at first and second, Giants utility man Ben Resnick walked the bases loaded, then watched a bloop fall into left field for a single. With the runners moving on contact, two runs scored, giving the Falcons the lead 3-2.

The Giants fought back in the top of the 4th, starting with successive singles up the middle by right fielder Jack Moseley and Coughlan, tying the game 3-3. Then, after Falcon pitcher Hunter Pelayo hit Corvi in the forearm, it took two conferences between ump's and coaches to award Corvi first base. Pelayo then plunked the next batter, Giants left fielder Tyler Sofnas, for good measure, as if to confirm that the ump's had made the right decision on Corvi.

With just one out, the bases were loaded for Trono, who hit a sharp comebacker which looked like it might end the inning. Pelayo wheeled and dished to shortstop Vincent Vasell, who double-clutched for the second time in the inning, throwing behind the speedy Trono, and allowing Coughlan to score the go ahead run, 4-3.

With the bases still loaded, hopes were high for Solle, who had knocked one out just two days prior on the same field, but Solle, hoping to recreate his past heroics, swung and missed at a strike three somewhere up around his eyeballs.

In the bottom of the 4th, the Falcons loaded the bases with no outs on a walk, a well-placed bunt, and an ball in the hole that Solle made a circus play on to keep in the infield. McGinty

then tied the game 4-4 with a sacrifice fly to center field, deep enough such that Gavin Soper's throw couldn't hold the runner at second.

With Falcons on first and third and one out, right fielder Samuel Johnston unloaded a bomb over Soper's head in center field. Soper almost caught up with it for a Willie Mays-style catch, but instead, it fell for a two-run double, giving the Falcons a lead they would never relinquish. Resnick's final batter, Vasell, pulled a scorcher down the right field line to score Johnston, but in a bright moment for the Giants, Moseley gunned down Vasell at second, with shortstop Danil Wells applying an amazing behind-the-back tag. The score stood 7-4 Falcons after four innings.

With work to do, the Giants went down in order in their half of the 5th, then gave up four more runs in the bottom of the inning to fall deeper in the hole, 11-4. Sophomore Jack Gurley, called up from the JV for the tournament, was brought in for Resnick, and the Falcons loved the move, taking advantage of Gurley's control to swing freely.

But the Falcons were scraping the bottom of their pitching barrel as well, sending in two position players as pitchers to close out the last two innings, and giving up five runs in the process, mostly to Giant substitutes. Coughlan stroked his third hit of the game, then the Giants sandwiched a couple of hits between a walk, wild pitch, hit batsman, infield error, and dropped third strike, to end their half of the 6th down 11-8. The wheels were really falling off for both teams.

The Falcons resumed their batting practice in the bottom of the 6th, scoring 3 more on a variety of hits and Giants miscues. When it came time for the Giants' last at-bat, the wear and tear of three days of distant tournament play seemed palpable on players and fans alike.

New left fielder Sam Gersch hit a sacrifice fly to drive in new right fielder Wyatt Turkington and round out the scoring at 14-9, but that was too little, too late. After playing their best ball of the year on Thursday, the Giants had lost a squeaker on Friday, then showed up ragged on Saturday.

The loss brings Redwood to 13-4 on the year (8-1 MCAL), and ends their tournament at 1-2. The Giants get a break next week, with a lone rescheduled game against the Terra Linda Trojans, a team they steamrolled 14-0 in their first meeting. The Giants will need the rest to gear up for their rival matchup the following week as they take on the Wildcats of Marin Catholic.

April 7

GIANTS EDGED BY SAN MARIN IN TOURNAMENT PLAY, 2-1

Missing the mojo they had mustered the previous day against Foothill, the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants dropped the second game of their 3-day East Bay tournament (The "Service Champions Classic Tournament") to their marauding northern rivals, the San Marin Mustangs.

It was a frustrating loss for the Giants, who wasted another strong mound appearance by starting pitcher Rex Solle. Solle went the distance, allowing only two hits, and fanning 12 Mustangs against two walks. Solle did uncage two wild pitches and hit a batter, but overall held the Mustangs at bay.

The game turned on a handful of key plays. Through 3 ½ innings, neither team had threatened, with each team having generated only one infield hit, and with Solle fanning 8 Mustangs through the top of the 4th.

Solle led off for the Giants in the bottom of the 4th with a chopper up the middle which glanced off the glove of Mustang starting pitcher Sean McGrath, then off the glove of Mustang second baseman Joey Cipollini. In any case, the leadoff runner was aboard. Coach Firenzi then sent in sophomore Matthew Knauer to run for Solle.

Giants' first baseman Rory Minty slapped a single into right field, and, when Holtz booted the ball, it became clear that third base was Knauer's for the taking. All eyes shifted back to the basepath. Knauer had stumbled somewhere along the way, and didn't seem able to right himself. Staggering, bear-walking, and ultimately crawling the last 10 feet, Knauer looked certain to be pegged out at third. But somehow, Mustang third baseman Erik Bach missed the throw, allowing Knauer to reach safely with a final, exhausted stretch of his arm.

With runners now on first and third, and shortstop Danil Wells, one of the club's premier bunters, up next, Firenzi decided he would strike preemptively, and called the squeeze to get on the board. Wells squared around to bunt. McGrath, hearing the shouts of "Bunt" during his windup, uncorked a fastball headed straight towards Wells's face.

Wells, to his credit, somehow got the bat on the ball while spinning back to avoid the beanball, and even though the pitch hit his right index finger, managed to bunt it fair out in front of the plate. The play surely would be close at home... but wait... where was Knauer?

Apparently exhausted from his recent odyssey from second to third, Knauer had missed the bunt sign, and so was not at the plate, scoring the first run of the game, but instead remained safely at third, while Wells was thrown out at first base, injured finger and all. Minty, meanwhile, advanced to second base on the play.

Next up, Gavin Soper bounced a grounder to Mustang first baseman Hayden Devol. This time, Knauer broke for the plate, but Devol's throw was in time for the tag. The score remained 0-0 through four innings.

Devol led off the top of the 5th with one of Solle's two walks for the game, advancing to second on a Bach single and to third on a wild pitch. With runners on second and third, Mustang left fielder Jake Simpson cracked a line drive up the middle.

While fans held their breath, the ball *just* cleared a leaping Theo Trono at second base, so close that it appeared to skip off of Trono's glove, allowing Devol to start the scoring at 1-0 Mustangs.

With runners on first and third, Mustang second baseman Joey Cipollini laid down a sacrifice bunt just a bit too hard down the first base line. Minty was able to field the ball at depth, and slap a tag on Cipollini, all the while holding Bach at third. Apparently, the Mustangs weren't as familiar as the Giants regarding squeeze plays.

That point was rendered moot, however, by the next batter – Mustang center fielder and tormentor-in-chief of the Giants at the plate this season – Josh Martin. Martin hit a high chopper over Solle's head – a ball which took a while to descend to Trono – while Bach took off towards the plate. Trono grabbed the ball and fired home to Giants catcher Ben Resnick just ahead of Bach, but the throw was high! Resnick leaped to catch Trono's peg as Bach began his slide, landing on top of Bach and the plate. After catching the ball, Resnick's foot had clearly caught Bach in the head, before Bach crossed the plate.

Maybe not surprisingly, the umpire ruled that kicking someone in the head does not count as a tag. Bach was safe, and the Mustangs were up 2-0.

The top of the 6th brought a notable moment in the field. With Mustang shortstop Anthony Scheppler on first base, Devol launched a rocket into right field in the direction of Giants freshman Jack Moseley. Whereas earlier in the year, Moseley had taken his first step in on a similar ball, leading to a costly error, today Moseley's first step was back.

From his improved position, Moseley was able to size up the trajectory of the ball and take an optimal angle, racing towards the right field line, where he laid out for a spectacular catch, then popped up to double off Scheppler at first. Scheppler had no clue such a catch was possible, and stood on second base holding his jaw off the ground.

Down to their last at bat, the Giants were still down 2-0. With one out, Resnick walked, advancing to second on a botched pickoff. Third baseman Lucas Ghio then walked to put runners at first and second, and the tying run on base. Moseley then cracked a single to load the bases for the top of the order and chase McGrath.

Mustang right fielder John Holtz trotted in in relief, and got Trono to ground to second, for what looked like a potential game-ending double-play. However, Cipollini booted the ball, then rushed his throw to Scheppler, who then lost the handle as Moseley came charging into second. Resnick scored, making it 2-1, with the tying run seemingly in scoring position, and only one out.

But no, the umps conferred to rule Moseley out at second, and that Cipollini had controlled the ball for the out, then lost it on the exchange. The Giants were now down to their final out, with runners on first and third.

Hope sprung eternal though, for Redwood fans, as Solle arrived at the plate – the same Solle who had sent a ball over the fence the day before. The same Solle who had just thrown 98 pitches and allowed only two Mustang hits, and certainly deserved to win this game, didn't he?

With two strikes, two outs, in the bottom of the 7th, Solle connected, sending a ball soaring into left field. But alas, there would be no storybook ending to this one for the Giants. The ball descended into Simpson's glove well shy of the fence, and the Giants had been defeated 2-1.

With the loss, the Giants move to 13-3 on the year (still 8-1 MCAL, as tournament games don't count towards MCAL standings). They next face the College Park Falcons of Pleasant Hill tomorrow, who lost today to Serra of San Mateo, 7-4.

April 6

REDWOOD STOMPS FOOTHILL 5-1

Playing their best baseball of the year, the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants got their 3-day East Bay tournament off to a strong start, throttling the host Foothill Falcons on Day 1. Giants third baseman Rex Solle led the way at the plate for the Giants with two hits and three RBIs, including the Giants' first home run of the season.

Starting pitcher Rory Minty continued his undefeated run for the year, moving his record to 7-0, scattering five hits and striking out five Falcons against zero walks.

The Giants were on the board before a single out had been recorded. Second baseman Theo Trono greeted Falcon starting pitcher Tyler Gebb with a single under the glove of first baseman Jackson Flora. Solle followed with a soaring fly ball over the left field wall out beyond the '325' sign. Falcon left fielder Brady Conolly could only turn and watch as the ball cleared a well-worn baseball-shaped sign commemorating a Falcon championship from 1988. Here, in 2023, the score was 2-0 Redwood.

The Giants added two more in the top of the 3rd on some jaw-dropping baserunning. Trono once again singled to lead off the inning, moving to second on Solle's shot past Falcon third baseman Elijah Lammle. Giants shortstop Danil Wells then followed with a single into center which sent Trono steaming towards the plate.

Falcon center fielder Austin Harris delivered a strike, and it looked like catcher Trevor Harmon might have Trono dead to rights. But as Trono, Harmon, and Harris's throw converged at the plate, there was the ball, dribbling away on the ground. Trono was safe!

Wells alertly headed for second once Harris's throw had cleared the cutoff man. Back at the plate, Harmon pounced on the loose ball and fired a perfect throw down to second. Again, it

looked like Harmon might have his man. But no, Wells was safe by a hair. And now it was Solle, lurking at third behind Trono, who made his move towards the plate. Second baseman Mason Walsh, fresh off of the tag on Wells, turned and fired back to the plate. Again, it was going to be a bang-bang play. Harmon looked as if he had the tag in place, but somehow, headfirst, Solle was able to snake his right hand around the tag to touch the plate and score.

The game stood 4-0, and poor Harmon had come out on the losing end of three crucial plays in a span of less than 5 seconds.

The Falcons scored their only run in the bottom of the 4th, leading off with three hits, including Harmon's double off the left field wall, no doubt a payback attempt for his poor treatment the inning before. However, Harmon's luck was short-lived. After reaching third on a Harris single, Harmon raced towards the plate when a Minty pitch in the dirt skipped past Giants catcher Rory Coughlan.

After scrambling for the ball on the first base side of the backstop, Coughlan saw that Minty would not arrive in time, and sprinted ahead to dive over the plate, placing the tag on Harmon for out number one. Poor Harmon – on the losing end of a bang-bang tag play for the fourth time in one inning.

The Giants padded their lead in the top of the 5th, as Coughlan led off with a single to right, bringing right fielder Jack Moseley to the plate. Moseley laid down a sacrifice bunt towards third where a charging Lammler made the play at first. Coughlan, running on the play, noticed that no one was covering third, and continued around, beating Lammler to the base, and scoring shortly thereafter on a Solle single, making it 5-1.

Down to their last at-bat in the bottom of the 7th the Falcons ran into some Redwood defensive magic. Following another Austin single, right fielder Josh Luy smashed a ball into the hole. Solle, with two quick steps to his left, took the ball at chest level off the topspin hop, starting a gorgeous 5-4-3 double play, and taking the last breath out of the Falcons.

The win brings Redwood to 13-2 on the year (8-1 MCAL), and launches them into the winners' bracket of the tournament, where they will play the all-too-familiar Mustangs of San Marin tomorrow on the same Foothill ballfield. On Saturday, the winner of that contest will face the winner of Serra (San Mateo) vs College Park (Pleasant Hill), which will be played tomorrow at Livermore High.

April 4

GIANTS CRUISE OVER TERRA LINDA 14-0

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants put up a nine-run second inning on Tuesday, coasting to an easy 14-0 victory against the Terra Linda Trojans at

home. Twelve different Giants produced a total of 16 hits on the day, with center fielder Gavin Soper leading the way, garnering two extra-base hits, two runs and three RBIs. Left fielder Tyler Sofnas also cracked a triple for the typically smallball Giants.

Meanwhile, the Trojans committed three errors (and that's being generous), with only one hit to show for the entire game.

Junior Chas Veley got the start for Redwood, pitching five shutout innings, with three strikeouts to just one walk. Veley was dominant over the Trojans, facing just one batter over the minimum for his five innings of work, and throwing only 46 pitches on the day.

Sophomore Matthew Knauer and Senior Ben Resnick (erstwhile catcher, first baseman, designated hitter and now, apparently, occasional closer – even after catching 6 innings) both appeared for an inning each of mop-up work.

The Trojans' only hit came on the first play of the game. Center fielder Jonah Truett topped a weak dribbler toward third base, where Giant Rex Solle raced in for what would have been a spectacular barehand play. Unfortunately, Solle threw the ball away at first, but it was impossible to tell whether there was any chance of catching Truett. And since Truett didn't advance on the throw, there was no error at all, and he was credited with a single.

Truett's luck on the basepaths didn't last long, however, as Trojan second baseman Si Eon Davis slapped a comebacker to Veley's glove side. Veley wheeled and delivered to shortstop Danil Wells, who turned a 1-6-3 double play which retired Davis by at least three steps.

The Trojans' had only two other baserunners during Veley's run. In the top of the 2nd, pitcher Leon Cervantes topped another weak dribbler in the same spot as Solle's play in the first. However, this time, Veley reached the ball first, and was the one to throw it away. Not to be deterred, however, Veley quickly picked off Cervantes with a slick move, satisfyingly returning the bases to their proper and unoccupied state.

The Giants put a run on the board in the 1st with two outs, as first baseman Rory Minty's sharp grounder skipped off of Cervantes' glove, denying shortstop Nate Combrink any play on the ball. The left-handed Soper then reached out to send a doink double floating over third base, and landing just inside the left field line, scoring Minty. Soper's triple in the bottom of the 2nd landed in the exact same spot, but this time was on a rope, scoring two runs, and bringing the score to 7-0.

In the interim, the Giants had put up five more runs on a combination of hits by Knauer, Solle, and right fielder Jack Moseley, along with two walks, two wild pitches, an error and a hit batsman. Soper himself then scored on a third wild pitch, to make it 8-0, still with only one out in the inning.

The Giants added two more runs on another hit batsman (Resnick, who was plunked twice in the game), Sofnas' triple, and more singles by Knauer and Moseley (their second each of the inning). When the dust had cleared, the score stood 10-0 Redwood after two innings.

The final three runs of the game, spread over the remaining innings, came from RBI singles by Resnick and replacement outfielders Jack Corvi and Sam Gersch. Other fresh faces which were nice to see in the later innings included first baseman Harrison Lopic, second baseman Quinn Miller, third baseman Lucas Ghio, and right fielder Wyatt Turkington.

The win brings the Giants to 12-2 on the year (8-1 MCAL), serving as a tuneup before some more challenging opponents later in the week at a 3-day tournament in the East Bay. Redwood kicks off the action in Pleasanton on Thursday at noon, facing the Falcons of Foothill High School. Their schedule on Friday will depend on their Thursday result, and likewise Friday to Saturday.

March 31

REDWOOD REBOUNDS 3-0, AS SOLLE STIFLES ARCHIE

It was a new day for the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants. Coming off of a dispiriting 12-inning loss to the Archie Williams Peregrine Falcons in San Anselmo the night before, the Giants returned home to Moody Field and righted the ship, besting the Falcons 3-0.

Starting Giants pitcher Rex Solle, having walked in the winning run the prior evening, came back with a vengeance, striking out 13 Falcons and allowing only three hits over 6 1/3 innings. Most impressively, Solle issued zero walks (although he did throw a wild pitch and hit two batters), and came out of the game due only to pitch count limitation.

The Giants got on the board in the bottom of the 3rd, when third baseman Lucas Ghio reached on an error, then stole second. With one out, Solle stood in, facing Falcon starting pitcher Sam Black, the same Falcon he had walked the night before to close out the game.

Putting the past aside, Solle helped himself with a blooper that dropped into shallow right field. Solle rounded first and raced into second as Falcon right fielder Luca Genovese stood paralyzed

in hesitation, holding the ball not 50 feet away from Solle, apparently wary of Ghio rounding third.

It was especially satisfying for Solle to fly right past the stymied Genovese, who had scored two of the Falcons' three runs the night before, including the winning run in the 12th.

With Giants now on second and third, first baseman Rory Minty hit a sharp grounder to second baseman Jack Evans, who was able to hold the runners and throw Minty out at first. And when shortstop Danil Wells hit another grounder to Evans, it felt like this might be turning into yet another of the Giants' wasted threats from the last two days. After all, Redwood hadn't scored a run in 13 innings, stranding 18 runners over that stretch.

But this time, fortune smiled on the Giants. Evans couldn't handle Wells's hard-hit grounder, and, when he picked it up, decided to throw it home instead of throwing to first or simply holding the ball. As Ghio was sliding in to score, Evans' throw skipped past the outstretched backhand of catcher Gilly Roth, clattering around the backstop, and allowing Solle to race in and score as well, making it 2-0 Giants. Wells let out a huge whoop as he stood on second. It felt like the drought was over.

Evans, as if hurrying to complete his penance, handled a grounder from Giants center fielder Gavin Soper on the very next pitch for out number three, then led off the top of the 4th, hitting the first pitch he saw into left field for a single. Giants left fielder Tyler Sofnas, running in on the grounder, ran past the ball, letting it roll all the way to the fence, while Evans continued to third.

With no outs and Evans on third, Solle found his groove, rearing back to strike out the heart of the Falcon order and end the inning, then coming back in the 5th to strike out the side again.

The Giants tacked on an insurance run in the 6th, amidst more Falcon miscues. Soper walked, then took second on a botched pickoff attempt which hit him in the back. Catcher Rory Coughlan grounded to shortstop, reaching when Falcon freshman August Block's throw pulled first baseman Ryan Smith-Stewart off the bag, putting runners on first and third with one out.

As Giants right fielder Jack Moseley stood in, Black unloaded a wild pitch to score Soper and send Coughlan to second, making it 3-0. Then, there was a kind of déjà vu, as Moseley hit a sharp grounder to third baseman Henry Hanavan, who held the runner, but also pulled Smith-Stewart off the bag with his throw, marking Archie's 5th error of the game. This call took an umpire conference to decide, but in the end they got it right.

With 95 pitches under his belt, Solle came out firing in the top of the 7th, striking out Smith-Stewart for his 13thK, and pushing for the complete game. But when Roth fouled off three pitches on a 2-2 count, then flipped a flare into right field, Solle stood at 107 pitches, and was done for the day.

Coach Firenzi brought in Jerry Omara, the Baller from Kampala, to close things out, and Omara blew a fastball by pinch-hitter Jake Barnes for out number two.

Redwood fans, on the edge of their seats, grew a tad uncomfortable when the pesky Genovese lined a screamer down the right field line for a double, putting runners on second and third, and bringing the tying run to the plate in the form of left fielder Jackson Oliver-Roa. However, Omara got Oliver-Roa to pop up in foul ground behind first base, where Minty ranged back and made the play, ending the game.

With the win, the Giants move to 11-2 on the year (7-1 MCAL), and split their season series with Archie Williams. Solle leads the team in batting with a .405 average, and has now struck out 52 batters in just over 30 innings pitched. Trono's average is back up to .374, with Wells and Sofnas both at .333, and Coughlan at .324. Wells and Minty share the team lead in RBIs with 7. The top of the order continues to fly, with Trono and Solle scoring 11 and 10 runs respectively on the year, and Trono stealing 14 bases, with Solle and Soper at 7 each.

The Giants gear up for a busy week ahead, with five games scheduled starting Tuesday at home against the Terra Linda Trojans of San Rafael. Redwood then travels to Terra Linda on Wednesday, before embarking on a 3-day tournament in the East Bay, starting noon Thursday at the Foothill High Falcons of Pleasanton.

March 30

GIANTS DROP A 12-INNING HEARTBREAKER TO ARCHIE

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants went flat on Thursday, letting the Peregrine Falcons of Archie Williams come back, hang around, and then finally win an extra-inning contest in San Anselmo, 3-2. Although the Giants managed 10 hits over 12 innings, and only struck out twice, their contact never converted into scoring, as they stranded 16 runners on the day.

Things seemed to start off well for the Giants, who came in riding a 6-game winning streak, as they got on the board in the top of the 2nd against Falcon starter Charlie Scola. Center fielder Gavin Soper and left fielder Tyler Sofnas both reached base on infield singles, before catcher Rory Coughlan poked a seeing-eye grounder up the middle to score Soper.

Right fielder Jack Moseley followed with a squirrely bunt that was about to die on the third base line. Falcon catcher Gilly Roth pounced on it late, firing wildly past first baseman Sam Black, and scoring Sofnas, making it 2-0 with runners on 2nd and 3rd and only one out.

But while their fortunes looked bright at that moment, the Giants were unable to score further in the inning, and in fact came to bat a whopping ten more times without scoring.

Meanwhile, Giants' starting pitcher Rory Minty was enjoying a typically effective game, allowing no hits through the first three innings, and only one hit through five. The Falcons had only three baserunners through five innings, and one was just temporary. With two outs in the 3rd inning, Minty walked Falcon left fielder Max Lefferts, only to watch catcher Rory Coughlan gun him down at second two pitches later.

In the bottom of the 4th, Scola led off with a slow roller just past the mound, then advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt by Evans. Black's towering foul pop brought first baseman Ben Resnick all the way over to the side fence, where he deftly reached above the out-of-bounds marker to snare the ball for out number two, with Scola reaching third on the tag. The Rory-Rory battery came through again for the Giants, though, as Minty fired a fastball past third baseman Henry Hanavan, with Coughlan handling the foul tip to retire the side.

Things didn't go the Giants' way in the bottom of the 6th. The Falcons quickly loaded the bases on singles by right fielder Luca Genovese and Lefferts, followed by a well-placed bunt single by Scola. Minty, facing his first real threat in a while, responded by striking out second baseman Jack Evans on three pitches, freezing Evans in his shoes with a dastardly curveball for strike three.

Now with one out and the bases still loaded, cleanup hitter Black lifted what looked to be a routine fly ball out to Gavin Soper in center field. With the normally sure-handed Soper camped under the ball, the question became whether Genovese would score on the tag, or whether Soper would throw him out, preserving Minty's shutout.

As Black's ball arrived, Soper set his feet and began shifting his momentum forward to optimize his throw. But unfortunately, at that moment, and unbeknownst to the crowd, Soper was not 100%. In fact, earlier in the day on the basepaths, Soper had hyperextended his left knee while scoring Redwood's first run.

And as he stepped forward for the throw, Soper's left cleat caught in the Archie outfield turf, aggravating his knee. Wincing in pain, Soper glanced down and lost track of the ball, which bounced off of his glove and fell to the ground at his feet, allowing Genovese to score. Instead of being out of the inning up 2-0, the Giants were now up just 2-1, still with only one out, and the bases still loaded.

Giants shortstop Danil Wells dived to his right to corral Falcon third baseman Henry Hanavan's sharp grounder in the hole, then threw ahead from the seat of his pants to third baseman Rex Solle, forcing Scola for out number two. Unfortunately, Lefferts scored on the play to tie the game 2-2, but things could have been worse. The Giants finally got out of the inning when pinch-hitter Tiernan Bratcher-Mahon tapped a slow roller to second base, where Theo Trono waited just long enough for first baseman Ben Resnick to get back to the base and make the play.

Down to their last out in the top of the 7th, the Giants put together something of a threat. Moseley beat out a grounder to short, then stole second. Trono followed with a walk, then both orchestrated a double steal, putting runners on second and third, and bringing Solle, the Giants' leading hitter, to the plate. Sadly, Solle's squib down the first base line was handled easily by Black, retiring the side.

Minty, rebounding from his rough patch in the 6th, retired the Falcons in order in the bottom of the 7th, sending the game into extra innings, but also nearly maxing out his pitch count at 106, and finishing his day.

The Giants went down in order in the top of the 8th (and in 3 of the 5 extra innings), but the Falcons weren't as quiet in the bottom of the 8th against reliever Chas Veley, as Lefferts worked an 0-2 count into a leadoff walk, advancing to second on a passed ball, then to third on a comebacker.

With one out, and the winning run on third, Evans lifted a fly ball to center eerily similar to the one Soper had dropped two innings ago. This time, Soper made the play cleanly, holding Lefferts at third, and bringing cleanup hitter Black to the plate with two outs.

Black and Veley had squared off before. One year prior, on this same mound, Veley had no-hit the JV Falcons and their pitcher Black, only to lose 1-0 on his own throwing error in the bottom of the 8th. Now, in 2023, also in the bottom of the 8th, Veley came up big, striking out Black with a curveball away to retire the side. The score remained tied 2-2.

In the bottom of the 9th, the Falcons caused another minor scare, putting two runners on with two outs. Roth reached on a slap single up the middle, which Wells reached but had no play on. Then Falcon DH Hudson Lofrano hit what looked to be a routine ground ball to Solle at third.

By this time, the San Anselmo afternoon sun had nearly set out in left field, and was so low in the sky that Minty was blinded on Solle's throw across to first, dropping it and putting the winning run in scoring position. Fortunately, Veley again came up with the stop, striking out Genovese to retire the side.

After 11 innings, with the sun fully gone behind the trees, the coaches and umpires agreed to play at most one more inning. If the game remained tied after that, it would be resumed at Redwood the following day before their regularly-scheduled rubber match.

With that in mind, the Giants seriously threatened in the top of the 12th against Falcon pitcher Nick Forrest (now working his 5th inning in relief). With one out, Mosely, already with two hits on the day, worked a walk, advancing to second on a beautiful bunt single by Trono. Solle followed with a single up the middle, sending Moseley racing around third towards the plate. Unfortunately, Falcon starting pitcher Scola was now in center field, and uncorked a perfect throw to gun down Mosely by two steps, leaving runners on second and third with two outs.

With the infield and outfield in, and tensions high, the Falcons elected to intentionally walk known quantity Minty to load the bases and get to Veley, who, with only one at-bat on the year, seemed the easier out. But their gambit appeared to fail when Veley stirred the crowd with a line drive to right-center that looked to break open the game.

But the breakthrough was not to be. Maddeningly for Giants fans, Genovese had been playing well off the line in right field, and was able to race over, make the catch and retire the side.

Leading off the Falcons' final at-bat in the bottom of the 12th, pinch hitter Ryan Smith-Stewart slapped a grounder into the hole. Catlike, Solle skittered to his left to cut the ball off and make the play. The sun had been gone for at least 30 minutes by now, so Minty's main concern at first had changed to handling Solle's throw in the dark, which he did for out number one.

Genovese followed with a sinking liner up the middle, which Trono dived for and managed to knock down, but couldn't make a play on. Perhaps a bit rattled, and now facing the top of the order, Veley walked Lefferts on four pitches, putting runners on first and second with one out, and the dangerous Scola (already with two hits and two walks on the day) coming to bat.

At this point, needing a stop, Head Coach Mike Firenzi brought in Solle to replace Veley. Even though Firenzi had slated Solle to start the following day, the current situation allowed a maximum of three more batters. And coming off of a dominating 15-strikeout performance, Solle seemed a perfect fit for the occasion, dealing heat in the dark to strike out Scola looking on four pitches.

Alas, with only one out needed to shut the door on a long day, the momentum turned against Redwood. Solle couldn't find the plate, walking Evans on five pitches to load the bases, then Black on four pitches to end the game. The Falcons mobbed Black at first, right in front of the Redwood dugout, as the Giants trudged off in the dark, smarting at their first MCAL loss of the year.

With the loss, the Giants move to 10-2 on the season (6-1 MCAL). The teams are set to square off again tomorrow at Redwood, where Solle will get another chance to see the Falcons' lineup, this time in broad daylight.

March 24

GIANTS, SOLLE NOTCH #500 FOR FIRENZI

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants wrapped up a two-day sweep of the San Rafael Bulldogs, writing a new page in Marin County sports history as they helped Mike Firenzi to his 500th win as a baseball head coach. A pioneer to that milestone, Firenzi had set the Marin County record the previous year with his 473rd win, surpassing former Redwood Head Coach Al Endriss, who at age 95 was on-hand for both occasions. The final tally of the baseball game was 7-0.

Junior Rex Solle was blistering on the mound for the Giants, racking up 15 strikeouts against a single walk, and consistently blowing fastballs past Bulldog hitters up and down the lineup. As opposed to his previous two outings, where he needed an inning or two to settle down, Solle took early command of the strike zone, striking out the side in order in the bottom of the 1st.

In a scheduling oddity, despite the game being played at Redwood's Moody Field, the Giants were deemed to be the "visiting" team. The venue had moved due to the impact of extensive recent rain on San Rafael's home turf (aka 'Muddy Field').

While the Bulldogs only managed two hits and four baserunners against Solle, and never threatened, the Giants were on the board before making a single out. Second baseman Theo Trono kicked things off in the top of the 1st with a single up the middle off of Bulldog starter Lazlo Clements. Solle then helped himself with a rocket to left-center for a stand-up double, scoring Trono.

It was Trono again in the top of the 3rd, singling to right field and stealing second, then advancing to third on Solle's fly out when Bulldog right fielder Dexter Jackson's throw skipped past third baseman Quinn Madden. With Giants first baseman Rory Minty at the plate, Firenzi sent Trono in on the squeeze, and Minty laid down a beauty, making it 2-0.

The Giants added two in the 4th, as shortstop Danil Wells led off with a shot up the middle, racing around to third on center fielder Gavin Soper's picture-perfect bunt to the left side. After Soper stole second base, third baseman Lucas Ghio followed with a sac fly to right, scoring Wells and sending Soper to third. Soper then scored on a grounder to short by right fielder Jack Moseley, extending the Giants' lead to 4-0.

With two outs in the 5th, Wells and Soper teamed up again. Wells drilled another ball up the middle, scoring Minty, who had walked, then taken second on a dropped third strike. With Wells running from first, Soper slashed a curving liner into left field, where Bulldog AJ Thorpe gave chase but watched it clank off his glove, turning Soper's single into a triple, and scoring Wells, making it 6-0.

The Giants rounded out the scoring in the top of the 6th, when replacement right fielder Sam Gersch singled to left, scoring left fielder Tyler Sofnas, who had been drilled in the back, but bounced up to steal second, and had advanced to third in a rundown.

Wells, usually on the highlight reel at shortstop, had the tables turned on him in the top of the 7th, when he led off with a looping flare into shallow center field. The ball looked to be Wells's third hit of the day, and fourth time on base. However, Bulldog shortstop Lazlo Clements killed that dream on the dead run, diving backwards into center for the spectacular over-the-shoulder catch. It was a rare bright spot for San Rafael during two dark days on the diamond, with Redwood outscoring the Bulldogs by a combined 17-2.

With the milestone win, the Giants move to 10-1 on the year (6-0 MCAL), and sit at #6 in the NCS rankings on MaxPreps (#41 in California). Solle moves over .400 at the plate to lead the team at .414, followed closely by Wells (.375), Sofnas (.367) and Trono (.364). Just to show what kind of smallball the Giants are playing, their 90 hits on the year to-date are comprised of 82 singles, 6 doubles and 2 triples (and zero home runs).

With his 15 K's on the day, Solle (38) moves past Minty (36) for the team lead in strikeouts, although, at 2-0, he has a long way to go to catch up to Minty's 6-0 record.

Next up, the Giants head across to San Anselmo on Tuesday to battle the Archie Williams Peregrine Falcons, before returning the favor on Friday and hosting the Falcons at Moody.

For an excellent profile of Coach Firenzi, and some fine perspective on his career, please see <https://www.mariniij.com/2022/03/04/prep-baseball-redwoods-record-setting-coach-shows-no-signs-of-slowng-down/>

March 23

GIANTS STEAMROLL SAN RAFAEL, 10-2

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants struck early and often in a 10-2 thrashing of the current MCAL bottom-dwelling San Rafael Bulldogs, on a chilly March afternoon at Moody Field. The win brings Giants Head Coach Mike Firenzi to 499 wins over his illustrious career.

Senior southpaw Rory Minty tossed the first four innings for the Giants, allowing one run on three hits, striking out five Bulldogs on zero walks, and moving to 6-0 on the year. Jerry Omara, Matthew Knauer and Chas Veley combined to mop up for the Giants, as plenty of fresh faces saw playing time from the fifth inning onwards.

The Giants' third basemen led the way at the plate, with starter Rex Solle producing two hits, two runs and a walk, while his replacement Lucas Ghio came up with two hits, a run and an RBI of his own. Catcher Rory Coughlin contributed two hits as well; a total of eight Giants hit safely on the day. Interestingly, none of their eleven total hits went for extra bases.

In the bottom of the first, the Giants went up 4-0 on two walks, three singles and an error, and it felt like the game might turn into a runaway. But while the Giants did score ten runs on the day, they also stranded eleven runners, seeming at times to be caught off-balance by the Bulldogs' noticeably slower pitching.

Shortstop Danil Wells highlighted the Giants' day in the field, turning in another defensive gem. With two outs in the top of the 5th, Bulldog right fielder Samuel Perez smacked what looked to be a line drive single up the middle. But with a quick first step to his left, Wells had other ideas.

Diving, fully extended towards second base, Wells thrust the web of his glove along the ground and slid it just under the arriving ball, taking it on the fly to retire the side.

By then the score was 8-1, and the outcome never in doubt. The win brings Redwood to 9-1 for the season (5-0 MCAL), and sets the stage for tomorrow's rematch, also at Moody Field, where the Giants hope to produce Coach Firenzi's 500th career win at the expense of these same Bulldogs. Next week, MCAL action continues on Tuesday, as the Giants are scheduled to take on the Peregrine Falcons of Archie Williams in San Anselmo.

March 17

REDWOOD, SOLLE DELIVER ON TAM, 5-1

A day after outlasting their crosstown rivals in a seesaw, 9-inning fight to the finish, the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants and starting pitcher Rex Solle delivered the heat on Friday, walking away from the Tam High Red-Tailed Hawks 5-1, and sweeping their season series.

Solle tossed a complete game for his first win of the season, striking out 11 Hawks while allowing just 6 hits and not issuing a single walk. Solle got stronger as the game went on, blowing fastballs through the zone in the bottom of the 7th to strike out the side and end the game.

Things weren't so clear-cut at the start of Solle's outing, as Tam loaded the bases with no outs in the bottom of the 1st. Shortstop Kaldon Dossa led off by raking a single into left field, followed by second baseman Colin Lam's double into the gap in left center. Solle then proceeded to drill designated hitter Charlie Blau in the back, loading the bases with center fielder Carson Frame striding to the plate.

When Frame launched a ball high and deep into left center, it looked like the Giants were in for a long day. Redwood center fielder Gavin Soper, battling the afternoon sun, scurried back to make an outstanding play just in front of the wall. The ball was plenty deep enough to score Dossa, giving Tam the early lead 1-0, and leaving runners on first and third.

Then, as if Soper's effort had flipped a switch in Solle's brain, the junior right-hander stepped up his game, freezing third baseman Tyler Buxton with a curveball on the outside corner, then badly fooling first baseman Colin Day with a changeup to retire the side. The Hawks never threatened again the entire afternoon.

After bunting successfully in key situations throughout the year, and defeating the Hawks the night before on a celebrated squeeze play, it came as no surprise when the Giants began laying it down again to take the lead in the top of the 3rd.

Second baseman Theo Trono, batting left-handed against Hawks starting pitcher Eli Solem, led off by dragging a bunt down the first base line into no-man's land. Solem reached the ball, then looked up to flip to Day at first, only to discover that Day had joined him in no-man's land, and that no one was covering the base! The speedy Trono cruised safely across the bag, avoiding Solem's lunging tag with a dismissive shake of his hips.

Next up, Solle watched as Tam botched a pitchout, a maneuver they had attempted unsuccessfully throughout the past two days. Trying to catch Trono off of first, Hawks catcher Tristan Diecks threw wildly past Day, putting Trono on second, and defeating the purpose of the pitchout.

Solle then caught the Hawks off-guard by bunting down the third base line, forcing an unprepared Buxton to rush a sidearmed throw past Day, allowing Trono to race in and tie the score 1-1. First baseman Rory Minty followed with a single up the middle, and when Frame booted the ball out in center field, Solle came around as well, giving Redwood a lead they would never relinquish.

A rattled Solem then plunked DH Ben Resnick, bringing shortstop Danil Wells to the plate with no outs and runners on first and second. Wells, the squeeze hero from the night before, squared around boldly for the Giants' third bunt of the inning, eliciting glee from the Redwood dugout when Solem fielded the ball on the third base side, then threw it high to Day. Wells crossed first while Day was still in the air leaping for the throw, loading the bases with nobody out.

That was enough for Solem on the day, and the Hawks decided to try their luck with reliever Henry Simpson. Simpson got Giants left fielder Tyler Sofnas to hit a high fly ball to left center, where Frame camped under it for the out, then dropped the ball on the transfer, allowing Minty to score, and making it 3-1.

Simpson seemed to find some kind of rewind button, as he got Soper and catcher Rory Coughlan to fly out to Frame in the exact same spot on successive pitches. Sadly, Frame didn't drop the ball again either time, and the runners remained stranded.

Solle continued to pick up steam on the mound, bolstered by a couple of sweet double plays. In the bottom of the 3rd, Redwood third baseman Lucas Ghio moved to his left to snare Blau's topspin grounder off the short hop,

firing across to Trono to start a 5-4-3 double play and end the inning. Later, in the bottom of the 5th, Solle helped himself by grabbing Lam's comebacker and wheeling to second, where Wells turned it to Minty for a 1-6-3 sitdown pair.

Meanwhile, the Giants had loaded the bases with no outs in the top of the 5th, but were retired on one of the most unusual doubles plays in recent memory. Hawks reliever Jack Hanna didn't last long, walking Resnick before unleashing a pair of wild pitches, walking Wells, and hitting Sofnas to load the bases. The Hawks then yanked Hanna for Jonathan Bayler (a former Giant), who got Soper to ground to Day, who chose to get the force at home for out number one.

With the bases still loaded and Wells on third, Coughlan skied a towering popup halfway up the third base line, initiating mass confusion all around. First, Bayler tried to call off his teammates for the catch, before thinking better of it, and leaving the ball to Diecks, who whiffed on the catch, letting the ball land just inside the line. Thinking that another force situation had been created, Wells started home, where Bayler rushed to take a throw from Diecks, but stretched to handle the ball with his foot off the plate. With chaos erupting all around him, Bayler threw back to third to catch Wells, whereupon half of the Hawks began to leave the field, and the other half yelled at them to stay put, because "There are only two outs!" Finally, the ump told them all to get off of the field.

What had happened? As the umps eventually decided, the Infield Fly Rule applied on the play, which meant that Coughlin had been out from the moment he hit the ball the way he did (never mind that no one heard either ump call such a thing at the time). And because it was an infield fly, Wells should have stayed on the base at third, but because he had gone, he was now the third out, and Redwood had left three men stranded.

The Giants did manage to pad their lead in the top of the 7th, as Resnick started things off with a hard-hit ball that handcuffed Dossa. Jack Corvi, running for Resnick, took second on yet another beautiful bunt by Wells, then came in to score on a Sofnas single to center, making it 4-1. Soper followed with a ball that caromed off the mound – and Bayler's foot – to Lam, who threw it away, leaving runners on first and third with one out.

Noting perhaps that every Giants run on the day had been scored or set up on a bunt, Giants Head Coach Mike Firenzi called the squeeze again, sending Corvi, who easily made it 5-1 on Coughlan's tap down the third base line. A frustrated Buxton fielded the ball, and realizing no one was backing him up at third, turned and won a footrace with Soper, who had seen the same opening, and was understandably trying to advance.

There was no need for extra-inning heroics to finish the Hawks this time, as Solle saved his best for last, striking out the side in the bottom of the 7th, and ending with some serious smoke past Hawk right fielder Tito Fiersten. After opening with 27 pitches in the first inning, Solle had powered through the rest of the game at a rate of 12.5, all the while allowing zero walks.

The third Giants win in three days brings Redwood to 8-1 on the year (4-0 MCAL), and moves Coach Firenzi to 498 wins in his distinguished head coaching career. The Giants will try to add to those totals starting Tuesday, with an away-and-home series again the San Rafael Bulldogs, who currently sit last in the league with a record of 1-7 (0-6 MCAL).

March 16

REDWOOD RALLIES TO STUN TAM IN EXTRA INNINGS

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants spun an instant classic at home against their crosstown rivals the Tamalpais Red-Tailed Hawks, rallying from behind three times in dramatic fashion, and eventually walking them off 6-5 in the bottom of the 9th.

The Hawks arrived at Moody Field with a chip on their shoulder, having been knocked out of the MCAL playoffs last year by Redwood (also by the score of 6-5). They brought their ace to the mound, 2022 All-MCAL pitcher Tyler Buxton, who held the Giants to three hits over his first four innings, including striking out the side in the 4th. Unfortunately for Buxton, however, his mastery would not last much beyond that.

On the hill for the Giants was Jerry Omara - the Baller from Kampala – who held Tam to one run and two hits on 3 2/3 innings of work, but was also a bit too effectively wild, issuing five walks.

The Hawks got on the board right away, as leadoff hitter Kalden Dossa (another 2022 All-MCAL selection, at shortstop) walked and stole second, scoring on a single by Hawk center fielder Carson Frame, despite a strong throw by Redwood's own center fielder Gavin Soper. With runners now on first and second, the Giants escaped further damage when third baseman Rex Solle picked a screamer from Buxton off of his left shoelace, throwing over to a leaping Theo Trono at second base to double off Hawk DH Charlie Blau.

In the bottom of the 2nd, Giants shortstop Danil Wells led off by laying down a perfect bunt single, a foreshadowing of heroics to come. Wells advanced to second on a soft grounder to

Dossa, then to third on a balk by Buxton, but was left stranded when Hawk third-baseman Tito Feirsten, playing in, was able to reach DH Quinn Miller's tapper and throw him out to retire the side.

In the top of the 4th, Omara's fifth walk ushered in reliever Chas Veley, who caught Dossa looking with a fastball on the outside corner to get the Giants out of the inning. In the top of the 5th, however, two walks and a hit batsman later, Veley gave way to sophomore Matt Knauer with two outs and runners on second and third.

Knauer started off no better, walking his first two batters to force in a run, making it 2-0 Tam. With the bases still loaded, Redwood held their collective breath when Feirsten shot a line drive into right center, then exhaled when Soper arrived on the run, making the catch for out number three.

The highly-touted Buxton seemed gradually to implode in the bottom of the 5th, starting with a Soper single up the middle. Caught stealing at second, Soper could have obviated the need for later drama by somehow remaining on base, but instead became out number one.

Buxton then proceeded to walk pinch-hitter Wyatt Turkington, then allow a single up the middle by Giants right fielder Jack Moseley, before Trono advanced them both with a soaring sacrifice fly down the right field line.

With two outs and Solle at the plate, Buxton fully unraveled, uncorking a wild pitch to score Turkington and break the shutout, then hitting Solle to put runners on first and third, bringing first baseman Rory Minty to the plate. Minty, a 2022 second-team All-MCAL pitcher himself, stood in and watched as Buxton released not one, but **two** more wild pitches, scoring Moseley and Solle, and handing Redwood the lead 3-2.

The Hawks refused to collapse further, though. After a leadoff walk in the top of the 6th led to Solle coming on in relief, Wells shined on defense, making a circus play on Dossa's smash up the middle. Fully extended three feet off the ground, Wells snow-coned the high hop, somehow bouncing up and wheeling into a beautiful feed to Trono, who nearly turned a 6-4-3 double play.

Dossa, having reached safely, stole second before advancing to third on Hawk second baseman Colin Lam's grounder to Trono for out number two. Blau's rocket into the gap in left-center scored Dossa to tie the game at 3-3, and would have scored another too, had it not been for Wells's magic. Putting a bookend on his inning in the field, Wells quashed Blau's attempted steal

of second, taking catcher Ben Resnick's strong throw on the short hop, and slapping a nifty tag on the sliding Blau to retire the side.

The game remained knotted into the 7th, with reliever Max Paul standing in for the Giants. Frame raked Paul's first pitch well into right center, but the ever-alert Soper raced over to make the catch. Buxton, however, perhaps still fuming from his earlier implosion, laced a ball which even Soper couldn't reach, bouncing a double off the wall near the '350' sign.

In a replay of the previous day against San Marin, Wells picked lead runner Buxton, taking Hawk first baseman Colin Day's grounder and throwing ahead to Solle (now back at third base) for out number two. Day - now representing the go-ahead run - then stole second, moving to third on a passed ball. With the infield in, Fiersten then sent Hawk fans into a frenzy with a grounder into right field, regaining the lead 4-3. Again, were it not for Wells's heads-up play, the lead would have been greater.

Down by a run, in the bottom of the 7th, Redwood's top of the order came out fighting against Hawk reliever Dossa, whose over-the-top delivery took some getting used to. Trono figured it out quickly, dropping a single into left field, while Solle watched a few 12-6 curveballs go by before slapping his own single into the hole.

Minty's fly ball into left center couldn't advance the runners, but Resnick worked a walk to load the bases. The free pass was especially delightful to Redwood fans, as Dossa - apparently fearful of the speedy Trono and Solle (representing the tying and winning runs, respectively) - had made a total of *ten* pickoff attempts on them in the inning, and now had advanced them on his own.

With one out, Wells stood in, lofting the first pitch he saw deep enough into right field to score Trono and tie the game, 4-4, while also advancing Solle to third. Resnick held at first, but quickly stole second, raising the pressure on Dossa with two outs and the winning run 90 feet away. Unfortunately, Dossa picked that moment to find his groove, striking out Sofnas to end the 7th, and sending the game into extra innings.

Both teams went quietly in the 8th, as if taking a breather late in a boxing match, receiving treatment in their respective corners before coming out for the final round. And the Hawks came out punching in the top of the 9th. Giants reliever Resnick, making his first appearance of the year, decided to follow Coach Firenzi's pitching advice: "Throw strikes and let your defense make the plays."

Tam seemed to approve of this philosophy, as Frame sent Moseley back with a deep fly ball to right, before Buxton continued his redemption bid with a double down the line, well out of Moseley's reach. Resnick reached back to strike out Day for out number two, but Hawk left fielder Mike Gensler wouldn't cooperate, slashing a double down the left field line to score Buxton, and propelling Tam into the lead for the third time, 5-4. Wells helped Resnick out of the inning with a fine play on Fiersten's sinking liner. Sizing up the trajectory, Wells decided not to take the ball on the hop, instead falling forward and stretching towards the infield grass to make the catch on the fly.

The bottom of the 9th arrived with Dossa still on the hill, and daylight fading fast. Down to their last at bat once again, the Giants knew that it was now or never. Solle set the tone with a single up the middle, promptly stealing second, and ratcheting up the pressure yet again on Dossa, who didn't help his cause by grazing Minty's jersey, sending him to first.

With two men on and no outs, power hitter Resnick surprised the crowd with a sacrifice bunt, putting both the tying and winning runs into scoring position, and bringing Wells to the plate. With the infield in, tension high, and Solle dancing and feinting off of third base on every pitch, Wells worked the count full. It was then that Firenzi picked his moment to strike.

As Dossa delivered the payoff pitch, Solle came crashing down the line on a classic squeeze play. Wells squared to bunt, dropping the ball eight feet in front of the plate, where only Dossa could make the play.

Racing in, Dossa leaned down with his glove hand and shoveled the ball towards Hawk catcher Tristan Diecks, who was steeling himself for the imminent arrival of Solle, the tying run. Runner, ball and catcher all converged at the plate in a blur, and before anyone could tell exactly what had happened, the ball was seen dribbling off to the third base side, all the way to the backstop. The score was definitely tied.

All eyes turned to Minty, who had been following Solle the whole time on the squeeze, and who now saw the unexpected chance to continue home and score the winning run, which he did uncontested. Dossa, standing at the plate in hopes of a last-second play which never materialized, put his head down, turned and walked away, while the Redwood bench emptied onto the field, their whoops and hollers piercing the dusk. The final score stood 6-5.

With the win, Redwood improves to 7-1 (3-0 MCAL), approximately one-third of the way through the 2023 regular season. Next up: the Giants and Hawks go at it again tomorrow in Mill

Valley. Could it be another epic clash? Then, next Tuesday, the Giants hop over the hill to visit the Bulldogs of San Rafael.

March 15

REDWOOD RALLIES TO SWEEP SAN MARIN

After an eight-day hiatus, the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants returned to action at home, coming from behind to defeat the San Marin Mustangs, 4-2, and sweep their 2023 season series. Despite managing only four hits on the day, the Giants put up four runs in the 6th, then held on for the win.

Having shut down the Mustangs the prior week in Novato, senior southpaw Rory Minty took the hill again for Redwood under sunny skies. The game had been delayed nearly a week by an “atmospheric river,” the latest storm front in a record rainy season. In the 24 hours before the game, as the weather finally began to clear, Giants players had been seen carefully tending to their home turf, removing the standing water with tarps, sponges, and even an industrial vacuum.

Minty seemed to appreciate the sunshine and extra groundskeeping, as he set down the first six Mustangs in order, holding them scoreless through four innings. Unfortunately, Mustang pitcher John Holtz kept Redwood bats even colder, allowing only one hit through five innings, and setting down the Giants in order four of the five.

With one out in the top of the 3rd, Giants shortstop Danil Wells made a heads-up play on right fielder Ryan Burke’s routine grounder, throwing ahead to third baseman Rex Solle to catch lead runner Jake Simpson. The play proved to be crucial when center fielder Reily Desilva slapped a single into left field, a single that surely would have scored Simpson.

Now with two outs, Josh Martin – the 2022 All-MCAL first baseman, not to mention the Mustang who had most tormented Minty the week before - appeared to go around on a third strike, but was called to have checked his swing. So instead of retiring his nemesis and the side, Minty found himself with the bases loaded, facing another 2022 All-MCAL player - Mustang catcher Cole Chamberlain, a recent commit to the University of Texas.

It was around this time that the field umpire called time out to warn the Mustang dugout, where a collective cacophony of gravelly banter had been stuck on repeat, rising in decibels with each of Minty’s pitches. The ump explained that a pitcher’s windup should not be interfered with, and used the word ‘sportsmanship,’ which resulted in an even louder cacophony prior to Minty’s next pitch.

The Giants caught a break when Chamberlain ripped a grounder straight to Giants first baseman Ben Resnick. Resnick went to his knees to corral the ball, then looked up intending to flip to Minty, who had gotten a late break towards first. When Resnick realized there was no way Minty would make it there in time, he sprang to his feet and sprinted to the base, sliding feet-first to nip Chamberlain, preserve the 0-0 tie, and sneer pointedly at the gravelly-voiced Mustang dugout.

With two outs in their half of the 3rd, the Giants loaded the bases on a pair of walks and a hit batsman, before Minty was called out on a curveball so remote that it might have had a Kentfield zip code – the kind of call Minty might wish for on the mound, but didn't appreciate so much while at bat.

The Mustangs broke through in the top of the 5th, just as Minty was starting to look unhittable. After giving up a leadoff single to left fielder Jake Simpson, Minty bore down and fanned third baseman Erik Bach and right fielder Burke in quick succession, each waving past third strike fastballs with wicked outside movement.

But then, at the top of the order, Desilva managed a single up the middle, bringing up the left-handed Martin, who sliced a ball down the line the other way, sending Giants left fielder Tyler Sofnas all the way to the fence, and scoring both Simpson and Desilva, making it 2-0.

The Mustang dugout, clearly having forgotten their earlier collective lesson in sportsmanship, ratcheted their banter back up to 11, drawing yet another warning from the umpire. This time their coach wandered over from third base to chat with the ump, curious to learn more about this so-called "sportsmanship."

Although their peanut gallery became temporarily subdued, the Mustangs weren't done yet. With Martin in scoring position and first base open, Minty pitched around the dangerous Chamberlain, in the end issuing him an intentional walk. The strategy appeared wise when Holtz feebly topped a dribbler towards short, until Holtz legged out the hit, despite a terrific play by a charging Wells.

Fortunately, Chamberlain had been running full blast on the two-out play, and tore around to third, forcing Martin, just ahead of him, off the base. An alert Resnick ran at Martin - who was now hung out to dry - forcing him towards home and into the waiting tag of catcher Rory Coughlan.

It wasn't until the bottom of the 6th that Redwood came alive, kicked off by Solle's dribbler towards third base, which Holtz picked up and threw wildly past first. Singles by Resnick and Wells scored pinch runner Quinn Miller, before Sofnas tapped a déjà vu dribbler again towards the third base side of the mound. Sure enough, Holtz picked up that one too, and threw wildly again to first, loading the bases.

Clearly rattled, Holtz walked Coughlan with a ball in the dirt, tying the game 2-2, and leaving the bases full for center fielder Gavin Soper. With the infield in, Soper slapped a ball in the hole to score Wells, and when left fielder Simpson booted it, Sofner came around to score also. Suddenly, thanks to three of their four hits on the day, and two throwing errors by Holtz, the Giants were up 4-2.

Down to their last out, the Mustangs didn't go quietly. Martin and Chamberlain both singled, Chamberlain's shot down the right field line being Minty's 100th and final pitch of the game. Solle then came on to throw a grand total of two pitches, retiring Holtz on a grounder to second to end the contest.

With the win, Redwood improves to 6-1 (2-0 MCAL) on the year, with Minty a perfect 5-0. And in an attempt to catch up from the rain, the Giants are scheduled to squeeze their season series with Tam High into the next two days, hosting the Red-Tailed Hawks on Thursday, before traveling to Mill Valley on Friday.

March 7

REDWOOD VARSITY SHUTS DOWN SAN MARIN

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants brought their A-game to Mark Whitburn Field in Novato on Tuesday, kicking off 2023 MCAL play and pinning a decisive win on the San Marin Mustangs by the score of 5-1. The Giants grabbed a 2-0 lead before a single out had been registered, then never looked back, riding the left arm of senior ace Rory Minty through all seven innings. Minty scattered ten hits, but issued only one walk, and the Giant defense stood strong behind him, making play after play all day long.

Freshman second baseman Theo Trono greeted starting Mustang pitcher Sean McGrath with a bang, blasting a standup triple nearly to the wall in right center. Mustang outfielders Riley Desilva and Jake Whitlock converged near the ball, with right fielder Whitlock tumbling over a diving Desilva in spectacular fashion – such that it took several minutes to determine that both were unhurt.

Unimpressed with the delay, Redwood third baseman Rex Solle hammered a standup double into the other gap to score Trono, then scored himself on Minty's twisting flare, which dropped just inside the left-field line and spun away from the field to the side wall. Down 2-0 with no outs, McGrath managed to compose himself and suppress the rally, inducing successive comebackers from first baseman Ben Resnick and shortstop Danil Wells.

Minty made short work of the Mustangs in the bottom of the inning, fanning shortstop Anthony Scheppler for the first of three times on the day (all swinging). The only fly in the ointment was Mustang first baseman Josh Martin, who hit Minty well all day. Martin laced a double into right field, just under the glove of a diving Jack Moseley, but was left stranded on Scheppler's whiff.

San Marin managed their only run in the bottom of the 2nd, when McGrath ripped a grounder over the bag at third, just out of the reach of a diving Solle, then advanced to third on a single by left fielder Jake Simpson. The Giants looked to be out of the inning when second baseman Joey Cipollini grounded straight to Wells with two outs, but Wells's brief bobble allowed McGrath to score, and marked Redwood's only error of the game.

Redwood responded in the top of the 3rd, kicked off again by Trono, who singled to left, then stole both second and third. With the left-handed Minty stepping into the batter's box, Redwood Head Coach Mike Firenzi decided to keep the party going, sending Trono racing home with the pitch on a good old-fashioned squeeze play. Minty executed his part perfectly, dropping a bunt just far enough towards first to clear the way for Trono, making it 3-1.

San Marin's pesky Martin reached base again in the bottom of the inning on a blown call. On a routine grounder to first, Minty raced over to handle Resnick's throw, beating Martin to the bag by a step. Unfortunately, the infield ump saw something else entirely, ruling that Minty's foot had been off the base; a conference with his home plate counterpart revealed no further insight, so Martin had to be credited with a hit. Minty took out his discontent on Scheppler, fanning him again on 4 pitches, before handing the spotlight to Solle, who shut the Mustangs down by turning catcher Jon Holtz's sharp grounder into a sweet 5-4-3 double play.

The Giants continued to demonstrate their bunting prowess in the 4th, adding a run on center fielder Gavin Soper's expert example. Soper's precision tap started down the first base line like a confused tourist staring at a map, unsure whether to turn fair, foul, or to die right there on the line. The uncertainty flummoxed Holtz into firing the ball well into right field, scoring Wells, and extending Redwood's lead, 4-1. Not surprisingly, Wells had reached second on a perfect sacrifice bunt by Giants catcher Rory Coughlan.

The Mustangs tested Minty in the bottom of the 5th. In another close play at first, Minty leaped to snag Resnick's high toss, then came down on the bag just ahead of Cipollini, his momentum sending both players tumbling to the ground. A bit shaken up, Minty issued his only walk of the game to Desilva, but Coughlan quickly fixed the issue with a snap throw down to first. Resnick handled the rocket in front of the base in foul ground, sweeping a tag 180 degrees behind his back to complete the stylish pickoff.

Ever a threat, Martin followed by ripping a liner through the gap in left center for a double which would have certainly scored Desilva, who now sat on the bench thanks to Coughlan and Resnick. Martin's shot was visibly rising as it passed just over the glove of a leaping Wells on the edge of the outfield grass. Fortunately, Minty's favorite hitter Scheppler stood in next, and Minty struck him out again, swinging, to retire the side.

Minty helped pad his own lead in the bottom of the 7th, pushing a ground ball past McGrath (now at second base), to plate Trono, and rounding out the scoring at 5-1. The speedy Trono had

been drilled by Mustang reliever Erik Bach, then stolen second and reached third on a wild pitch. He finished with three runs and two hits on the day.

San Marin seemed done for in the bottom of the 7th, when Minty finally retired Martin on a routine ground ball to Trono, forcing the Mustangs down their last out, with the hapless Scheppler coming up. Perhaps feeling generous, or overeager to close things out, Minty pegged Scheppler, then watched Holtz smash a double to the wall in right center.

Soper and new right fielder Sam Gersch converged on the ball as Scheppler was rounding third with the green light from his coach. It was Gersch who got to the ball first, firing a strong throw in to Wells, who came over from short to collect the relay on the right-field grass, then wheeled around for what surely would be a close play at the plate.

Wells's throw to Coughlan came in on one hop, slightly up the third base line, just as Scheppler arrived, sliding to his right and reaching out towards home plate with his left arm. Coughlan, smartly positioned just in front of the plate, slapped the tag on Scheppler's arm with inches to spare, ending the game then and there. Wells, Minty, and Coughlan exulted as their teammates raced onto the field, while a dejected Scheppler trudged off into the sunset.

With the Giants now 5-1 on the year (1-0 MCAL), Coughlan leads all Giants hitters with a .438 average, ahead of Sofnas and Trono, who both stand at .353. Minty moves to 4-0, boasting 27 strikeouts against only 3 walks.

The Giants are scheduled to host the Mustangs Thursday afternoon in their rubber match, before battling Tam High next week home and away. However, following a record rainfall season, and with another "atmospheric river" fast approaching, it's anybody's guess how the upcoming schedule will actually shake out.

March 4

CASA GRANDE TOPPLES REDWOOD VARSITY 6-4

One crooked inning was all it took for the Gauchos of Casa Grande High School to hand the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants their first loss of the young 2023 season. With Redwood up by 2-1 through five innings, the Gauchos finagled five runs in the top of the 6th, then held on to win by a score of 6-4.

One day after shining on the road against the Petaluma Trojans, the Giants' pitching couldn't find the same mound magic at home. A quartet of Redwood hurlers issued 9 walks, hit 4 batters, and generally struggled to decipher an inconsistent and sometimes vanishing strike zone. Fans on both sides wondered aloud just what the home plate umpire might call on any given pitch throughout the chilly afternoon.

Redwood starting pitcher Rex Solle ran hot and cold through four innings, walking the bases full in the top of the 1st, but settling in by the 3rd inning to strike out the side 1-2-3. Dishing a whopping 40 pitches in that first frame, Solle managed somehow to hold the Gauchos to just one run, blemished only by right fielder Zach Baird, who singled to right with the bases loaded.

Jack Moseley, the Giants' lanky freshman right fielder, helped limit the damage in the first as he ranged back on a long fly ball to right-center by stout Gaucho first baseman Alex Cruz. At the last minute, and with the wall fast approaching, Moseley raised his long left arm on the backhand to corral the blast.

Redwood hitters were busy at the plate all day, putting runners into scoring position in every inning but one. In the bottom of the 2nd, catcher Rory Coughlin belted a triple into the gap in left-center off Gaucho starting pitcher Austin Steeves, but was thrown out at the plate on the very next play, trying to score on Giants center fielder Gavin Soper's sharp grounder to third.

In the 3rd, Giants second baseman Theo Trono legged out a grounder to short, then moved to second on a perfect sacrifice bunt by shortstop Danil Wells (his first of two on the day). When first baseman Rory Minty dropped a single into center field, Trono came racing around to score, tying up the game 1-1 with a head-first slide.

Solle made things interesting again in the top of the 4th, fanning Baird on a sweeping curveball before walking two batters, hitting one, and uncorking a pair of wild pitches to load the bases with two outs. The junior right-hander emerged unscathed, however, getting Gaucho catcher JT Summers to ground sharply to third, where Redwood's Lucas Ghio fired across to Minty at first to retire the side.

The Gauchos also threatened in the top of the 5th against Giants reliever Matthew Knauer, but were denied by Moseley, who snagged a curving fly ball down the right field line for the second out, then reached down below his knees to pluck a sinking line drive from the air for out number three.

Sparkplug Trono got things going again in the bottom of the 5th for Redwood against Gaucho reliever Wyatt Abramson, leading off with a double into the left-center field gap, then taking third on another perfect sacrifice bunt by Wells. Trono nearly scored when Abramson pitched wildly behind Minty's back, and was forced to retreat only when the ball caromed directly off the backstop and back to Summers.

With one out, and runners on first and third, Resnick sent a grounder into the hole, where Gaucho shortstop Jordan Giacomini gloved it and wheeled to second in hopes of starting an inning-ending double play. But that was not to be, as Resnick narrowly beat out the throw at first, scoring Trono and eliciting a howl of protest from Casa Grande's head coach. His arguments notwithstanding, the 5th inning ended with the Giants up 2-1.

That lead was short-lived, however, as Knauer started the 6th inning by drilling one batter, then walking another, before giving way to reliever Max Paul with one out. Paul started no better, walking Steeves (now in center field; Steeves walked four times on the day, and finished 1-for-1 in 5 appearances) to load the bases. Summers then lifted a ball to Soper in center field, deep enough to score the runner from third, tying the score 2-2 with two outs, and bringing the hefty Cruz to the plate with runners on first and second.

When Cruz powered yet another ball out in the direction of Moseley, who had robbed him at the wall at the start of the game, it appeared that history might repeat itself, and that the Giants might escape the inning. This time, however, turned out differently. Moseley started in, then realized that backspin on the ball might carry it over his head. Shooting his glove up at the last minute, Moseley couldn't contain the ball, and watched it squirt out of his grasp and roll behind him.

The runners, moving on contact with two outs, both scored easily, unlocking the score at 4-2. When Abramson followed with a line drive single to left making it 5-2, the wind seemed to have been sucked out of Redwood's sails.

Paul gave way on the mound to Chas Veley, who promptly picked Abramson off at first (appearing to end the inning), but inexplicably was called for a balk (replay showed none). The breaks were all going the Gauchos' way. Right fielder Kalen Clemmens then proceeded to take advantage of his free at-bat by dropping a flare just over third base and inside the left field line to pad the Gaucho lead at 6-2.

Redwood continued to battle, though, loading the bases in the bottom of the 6th with one out. Wells scored Solle on a grounder to third, drawing the Giants within 6-3, before Minty was called out looking at a ball a good six inches off the outside of the plate. Satisfied with the call, and with his lead, the Casa Grande coach began to argue again – this time to call the game for darkness, while the clock continued to tick, and the temperature dipped into the 40's. As before, his arguments went unheeded.

The Gauchos loaded the bases on Veley in the top of the 7th, temporarily silencing their coach's complaints, but Abramson's fly ball to Soper finally ended their afternoon at the plate.

In the bottom of the 7th, with two outs, in an eerie near-darkness, Soper singled up the middle to drive in Resnick and bring the Giants within two. And when Soper advanced to second on a passed ball, it seemed that maybe, just maybe, they had a chance to tie it up. But once Solle waved at a last Abramson curveball, the dim red lights on the scoreboard reading 6-4 were all that was left to see.

The loss brings the Giants to 4-1 on the season (0-0 MCAL). They kick off league play next Tuesday in Novato at San Marin, before returning home to host the Mustangs on Thursday.

March 2

GIANTS VARSITY TAKES DOWN PETALUMA, 6-0

Riding the 1-hit pitching of Senior southpaw Rory Minty, the Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants dispatched their perennial non-league nemesis the Petaluma Trojans Thursday with surprising ease, 6-0. Minty carried a no-hitter into the 6th inning, finishing the complete game with eight strikeouts against a single walk.

Having fallen twice the prior year to the Trojans, including a season-ending loss in the NCS D-II Semifinals, the Giants' early-season victory on Petaluma's home field was all the sweeter. Redwood racked up 11 hits and committed just one error on the day, steadily pulling away from the Trojans throughout a chilly March afternoon.

The Giants got on the board right away in the top of the 1st, when first baseman Ben Resnick's long fly ball to right field was misplayed by Trojan Jasper Jennings, scoring Minty, who had reached base on a walk.

Minty's stellar outing on the mound started inauspiciously with a 4-pitch walk and wild pitch, immediately placing Trojan DH Raime Dayton into scoring position, but a soft fly ball to left fielder Sam Gersch and two quick strikeouts shut down the Trojans for the inning. Minty would allow no further walks, and only two more baserunners over the entire game.

In the top of the 3rd, Giant third baseman Rex Solle led things off with a single to left, stealing 2nd despite being picked off, and advancing to 3rd on Minty's slow roller to second baseman Flynn Shoop. Shoop's desperate throw caused Trojan behemoth first baseman Aaron Davainis to prostrate his entire 6'5", 275lb frame towards right field, and seemingly to remove his foot from the base, but the ump saw fit to call Minty out nonetheless.

Amped up by the questionable call, Resnick responded on the next pitch with a single to score Solle, scoring himself following two more sharp hits by right fielder Tyler Sofnas and shortstop Danil Wells.

The Giants tacked on more runs in the 5th and 6th, highlighted by Sofnas' double into the gap in left-center, and RBI singles from Solle and catcher Rory Coughlin. Center fielder Gavin Soper made it around as well, leading off the 6th with a seeing-eye grounder up the middle, stealing second, taking third on a wild pitch, then scoring on a wild pickoff attempt at first base.

Soper bedeviled the Trojans in the field as well, racing to his right in the bottom of the 3rd to sprawl out and rob shortstop Colton Delina of extra bases with a spectacular backhanded catch. And with two outs in the bottom of the 7th, and the daylight fading fast behind the Petaluma hills, it was Soper again charging in and diving to deny the burly Davainis of a hit, and sending the Trojans home for the day.

Considering that – nine months earlier - it had been Davainis on the mound who had pitched a complete game and ended Redwood's 2022 season by striking out the side, it felt to Giants fans at that moment as if some justice had been done.

With the win, Redwood moves to 4-0 on the year (0-0 MCAL), and will host the Casa Grande Gauchos (also from Petaluma) on Friday, before kicking off MCAL play next week at San Marin.

February 25

Redwood Giants Varsity Grabs Lead in Sixth Inning to Defeat Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish

Redwood Giants Varsity stole the lead late and defeated Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish 2-1 on Saturday. The game was tied at one with Redwood Giants Varsity batting in the bottom of the sixth when Rory Coughlan singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Redwood Giants Varsity pitchers struck out eight, while Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish pitchers sat down one.

Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish got things moving in the first inning. Aaron Louis's sac fly scored one run for Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish.

In the bottom of the second inning, Redwood Giants Varsity tied things up at one when Gavin Soper singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one. Rory Minty was the winning pitcher for Redwood Giants Varsity. The bulldog allowed zero hits and zero runs over two innings, striking out three and walking zero.

Dylan Adelman took the loss for Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish. The righthander allowed zero hits and zero runs over one-third of an inning, walking zero.

Chas Veley started the game for Redwood Giants Varsity. The ace surrendered one run on one hit over five innings, striking out five and walking zero. Louis started the game for Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish. The southpaw lasted four innings, allowing four hits and one run.

Redwood Giants Varsity saw the ball well today, racking up six hits in the game. Soper and Coughlan each racked up multiple hits for Redwood Giants Varsity. Coughlan and Soper each managed two hits to lead Redwood Giants Varsity. Redwood Giants Varsity was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Coughlan made the most plays with eight.

Quinn Middleton went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory Varsity Fighting Irish in hits.

February 23

Redwood Giants Varsity defeated Rancho Cotate Varsity Cougars 1-0 on Thursday as three pitchers combined to throw a shutout. Max Paul struck out Nate O'Leal to finish off the game.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Redwood Giants Varsity pitchers struck out nine, while Rancho Cotate Varsity Cougars pitchers sat down four.

One bright spot for Rancho Cotate Varsity Cougars was a single by Stephen Scott in the second inning.

Paul took the win for Redwood Giants Varsity. The ace lasted one inning, allowing zero hits and zero runs while striking out one and walking one. Matthew Knauer threw two and two-thirds innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Lucas Hermes was on the hill for Rancho Cotate Varsity Cougars. The pitcher went seven and two-thirds innings, allowing one run on three hits and striking out four.

Rex Solle started the game for Redwood Giants Varsity. The bulldog lasted four and a third innings, allowing one hit and zero runs while striking out seven

Ben Resnick led Redwood Giants Varsity with two hits in two at-bats. Redwood Giants Varsity was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Resnick made the most plays with nine.

February 11

The Redwood Varsity Baseball Giants got their 2023 season off to a rousing start with a 19-2 thrashing of the Analy Tigers, on a bright, chilly February morning in Sebastopol.

While the Giants needed a few innings to push a run across, they proceeded to post crooked numbers in each of the last four innings, consistently keeping the smallball line moving, with 20 singles, 6 stolen bases and only one extra-base hit on the day. Meanwhile, four Redwood pitchers combined to allow just one Tiger hit over seven innings, missing a no-hitter by a single out.

The difference between the two programs seemed evident from the start. After Redwood finished a crisp warmup session in their fresh new travel uniforms, the Tigers took to their home field somewhat raggedly, displaying neither names nor numbers on shirts which appeared in an array of colors, and which were decidedly “non-uniform,” raising questions about the details of their roster. For example, the Tiger starting pitcher and leadoff hitter, styled anonymously in a plain black t-shirt, was revealed to be one Connor Dooley, who allegedly is registered somewhere with the unusual uniform number of 99.

In the top of the first, talented freshman second baseman Theo Trono started things off for the Giants by lifting Dooley's second pitch of the year into left field for a single, then immediately stole second. Next up, center fielder Gavin Soper raked a sharp liner up the middle to put runners on first and third with no outs, but was promptly picked off flatfooted at first.

Pitcher Rory Minty's soft fly ball to shallow left couldn't advance Trono, but it seemed Redwood would draw first blood anyway, when first baseman Ben Resnick powered a ball all the way to the fence down the right field line. Resnick had at least three bases on his mind when the home plate umpire surprisingly called the ball foul. The problem was that, with the morning dew heavy on the uneven outfield grass at this early-season game, Analy hadn't yet drawn any foul lines beyond the bases, so Resnick's ball was "down the right field line" in theory only, since there was no right field line. Visibly frustrated, Resnick returned to the plate, only to swing and miss on a slow curve ball, retiring the side.

The remainder of the first three innings passed uneventfully, as returning Redwood southpaw ace Rory Minty held the Tigers hitless, allowing just two baserunners on a walk and a throwing error.

The Giants finally broke through in the top of the fourth, pushing 6 runs across on four singles, two wild pitches and a walk. Left fielder Tyler Sofnas got things going with a single to right, stealing second, then combining on a double-steal with third baseman Lucas Ghio, who had walked. With runners on second and third and no outs, Giant shortstop Danil Wells singled sharply up the middle to score two, opening the floodgates for Redwood.

Catcher Rory Coughlin followed with a perfectly-executed hit and run. With Wells running, the right-handed Coughlin guided the ball straight through the hole vacated by Tiger second baseman Renzo Cantu. And when right fielder Jerry Omara walked to load the bases, it brought up the top of the order in the form of the hot-hitting Trono, who had been robbed in the 3rd on a sinking liner to center field. The ball had been called a catch, but looked to have been trapped.

Trono more than made up for it, however, reaching out and poking Dooley's latest offering into left field, scoring another two, as Coughlin tore around third on Wells's heels, just beating the throw. After Omara scored on a wild pitch, Trono came in on what seemed like a routine grounder from Minty to Tiger first baseman Blake Thomas. Thomas, handling the ball well off the base, realized that Dooley was not going to cover in time from the mound. He then turned and flipped to Cantu, who was also racing towards first from his position at second base. Cantu caught the toss somewhere in the general vicinity of first, then embarked on a kind of toe-tapping hunt for the bag, not really coming close to finding it as Minty rushed safely past. Nonetheless, the umpires decided to award the out to Analy, which was yet another bad call, but not heartbreaking, as the score now stood 6-0, and the Tigers were clearly on the ropes.

After Minty polished off his 4-inning tuneup with a 1-2-3 inning, Redwood took to the plate again in the top of the 5th, batting around and pushing across eight more runs. Highlights included two more singles from Wells, Trono's third hit of the game, and a bases-loaded smash from new left fielder Chas Veley over the right fielder's head and to the fence, scoring Coughlin to make the score 10-0. The ball turned into the game's longest single, however, as the coaches decided to stop the bleeding and held the two runners in front of Veley, who was nearly to second when he realized the base wouldn't be open, so was picked off easily on his forced

backtrack to first. The out hardly squashed the rally, though, as Minty drove the next ball to center, scoring both runners and making the score 12-0. Incoming first baseman Harrison Lopic also contributed, singling and scoring run number 14 for the Giants.

Jerry Omara took the hill for Redwood in the bottom of the 5th. Omara, a recent transfer originally hailing from the east African country of Uganda (hardly known as a baseball hotbed), came out firing, striking out the side after a leadoff walk, and retiring the Tigers 1-2-3 in the sixth. Omara also helped himself at the plate with a double to left, the Giants' only extra-base hit of the game, scoring incoming second baseman Quinn Miller and making it 15-0.

Redwood continued to pour it on, adding another run in the 6th, and three in the 7th, for a total of 19 on the day. Wells and Sofnas led the way with four hits each, with Sofnas reaching base six times - the other two the hard way, via fastballs to his left shoulder.

Analy fans broke out in somewhat sarcastic applause in the bottom of the 7th, as the Tigers managed to touch Giant reliever Matt Knauer for two unearned runs, and their only hit of the game, a two-out double by third baseman Ben Menard over Sofner's head in center field. When Knauer drilled the next batter, the Giants brought Veley to the mound to end things, which he did with a single pitch, getting Cantu to pop up to Wells for the final out of the game.

The Giants (1-0, 0-0 MCAL), will continue their early season non-league play on Feb 21, visiting the Montgomery Vikings in Santa Rosa.