

A's Head into Playoffs Undefeated

By Frank Tse



Charlie Mollahan scores the go-ahead run in A's come-from-behind victory Photo Ron Garcia

After losing an early 10-0 lead, and trailing by a run in the top of the fifth, the Orinda Pinto A's could feel their dream of a 12-0 season slip through their mitts.

A's Manager Steve Cassriel called a quick team huddle to calm the nerves of his young players.

The Piedmont Cubs had scored four runs to take the lead in the fourth, and matched that effort with excellent defense, shutting down the top of the A's line-up 1-2-3 for the first time all season.

While Cassriel reminded the players to have fun, Coach Scott Mollahan pulled out a stratagem not found in any playbook as he lifted every player's spirits with a Starburst candy.

Whether inspired by Cassriel's words or by Mollahan's Starbursts, the A's limited the Cubs to one run in the last two innings, and knocked in four runs of their own to seal a thrilling 16-14 victory.

Asim Khan started the A's fifth inning rally with a double into the outfield. Next, speedy Derrick Garcia beat out an infield single to set the table for Charlie Mollahan's clutch 2 RBI double. After Mason Zimmerman's single, and a pop fly by Zacary Weiner, Paul Bakshi hit a double into

the outfield to give the A's back their lead.

Cassriel praised the improvement of the first-year players as a key to the A's success. "Every team in this league has improved its defense since the season began in March," said Cassriel. "Derrick Garcia, Tommy Brovelli, Zac Weiner, and Charlie Mollahan have significantly raised their batting average in the second half of the season despite the tougher defense."

But improving defense by the A's was also a key. Second baseman Ben Mollahan almost single-handedly shut down the Cubs in the last inning by fielding two grounders for outs, and catching an infield fly. In the fourth inning, third baseman Stephen Tse knocked down a grounder and alertly chased down Cub Harry Kohr as he tried to return to second. Will Cassriel caught two liners for outs in the Pitcher's Assistant position, while Henry Connor anchored down first base duties with skilled efficiency.

After a week off, the A's and the nine other teams will begin the round-robin, double elimination play-offs, which may be decided once again by timely hitting, defense, and timely Starburst boosters.