LAMORINDA WEEKLY



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# Northern California Team Wins National Championship Title

*Submitted by Anne McNally*

The 11 and under Lamorinda Cougars capped off an exciting week of fierce baseball competition at the 2008 USSSA Elite World Series in Orlando, Florida by taking home the National Champion title. This is the first time a team from Northern California has won the national title in any age division. The Elite World Series brings together the nation's top 24 elite travel baseball teams in each age division, to face off in a week long battle for the National Championship title at Disney's Wide World of Sports complex in Orlando, Florida. The Cougars, of the Lamorinda Baseball Club in Moraga, blazed through the tournament undefeated, despite facing some of the top ranked teams in the country. They were seeded first after pool play, having defeated the #3 ranked Florida Fire and the North Alabama Giants. Entering the double elimination playoff round, the Cougars first met the RBA Seahawks from Corpus Christi, Texas, ranked 10th by Travel Ball Select. The Cougars then had to beat the Houston Lightening (#5 nationally) twice. The first game was a 9 run shut out, but the 2nd game was a come from behind win late in the game. The Cougars were down by 6, but scored 7 runs in the 5th inning to take the lead. The scoring marathon was capped off by Walter Tucker's two out game winning hit. The Cougars held on tightly to their one run lead, getting 3 quick outs in the top of the 6th to end the game. In the semi-final game, the Cougars met their Northern California rivals, TABU (#2 nationally), which lived up to expectations as being the game of the tournament. The Cougars and TABU have met on their home turf three times this season, with the Cougars coming out on top with a last inning come from behind win each time. The semi-final game did not disappoint. The game was a defensive battle that remained scoreless through 3 innings. The Cougs pulled off yet another come from behind win in the 5th inning, with Tucker once again providing the game winning hit, to propel the Cougars on to the Championship game. Pitcher Daniel Slominski allowed only two hits and two unearned runs, striking out 9 in a complete game victory over the nation's #2 ranked team. In the Championship game vs. the West Chester Sluggers of Ohio,

the Cougars took an 8-0 after 2 innings. They easily held on to win the game 10-4, taking home the National Championship crown. Lamorinda baseball, now entering its 6th season, is a competitive travel program drawing all-star players from the San Francisco Bay area. Eric Benedetti, Mathew Bicker, Johnny Breidenthal, Drew Downing, Joe DeMers, Conner McNally, Tyler Petite, Jake Rider, Daniel Slominski, Marcus Turner Jr, and Walter Tucker made up the Cougar roster in Orlando. Slominski was named the tournament MVP with 3 complete game wins and a save over the nation's #2, #3, #5 and #10 ranked teams and giving up only one earned run in 18 innings. Joe DeMers led the Cougar's offense in most categories and was named the Elite 24 Offensive MVP. DeMers also pitched the Cougars to 3 wins and a save, including a perfect game. The Cougars finished the 2008 season as the #1 11 under team in the nation with a record of 80 wins and 18 losses (only 4 of the losses were to 11U teams, as the Cougars played up most of the season, dominating in the 12U division and winning several 12 U tournaments).

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