

Little League Classic a hit with pros, youth

By TRAVIS JOHNSON
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WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — Despite spending the afternoon with 12-year-old Little Leaguers who idolize pros like himself, Josh Bell didn't find himself dispensing much advice.

"No one came to me and asked, 'What do you think about my swing?'" Bell said. "It was more like, 'Follow me on Instagram' or like this or that picture. It was more lighthearted."

So he gave them a first-hand demonstration of how to hit one out.

Bell homered and drove in four runs to lead the Pittsburgh Pirates over the St. Louis Cardinals 6-3 in the Little League Classic on Sunday night.

The teams played at renovated Bowman Field, a 91-year-old minor league ballpark located 5 miles from where the Little League World Series is taking place. Sitting in the front rows were admiring Little Leaguers who got to mingle with the big league stars earlier in the day, part of a Major League Baseball initiative to celebrate youth baseball.

After the final out of MLB's first regular-season game in Williamsport, the Pirates shook hands on the field as usual following a victory. And then — in a nod to Little League baseball — both teams lined up at home plate and shook hands with each other, throwing in some hugs and high-fives to finish off a feel-good day.

"It was refreshing every once in a while to be able to look in the stands and



The Pittsburgh Pirates and St. Louis Cardinals line the baselines, and the 16 Little League teams form a circle on the field before the Little League Classic baseball game between the Pirates and the Cardinals at Bowman Field in Williamsport, Pa. on Sunday.

see the kids watching the game," Pirates manager Clint Hurdle said. "It was one of the highlights of my career."

Cardinals manager Mike Matheny also appreciated the atmosphere inside a 2,366-seat venue that was packed with 2,596 fans.

"You can't help but get caught up, especially these kids treating our players like they're heroes as they walk through there," Matheny said. "Pretty special stuff. I think that's something they never get used to completely."

Bell sent a pitch from Mike Leake (7-12) over the right-center wall for a two-run shot in the first inning. The rookie slugger added a two-run single in the third to give Pittsburgh

the lead for good.

"He's a maturing player," Hurdle said. "His overall game has just found a good, competitive place at this level. He's become a very definite guy that can do some damage at the plate."

Adam Frazier homered for the second straight game and Andrew McCutchen added an RBI grounder for the Pirates, who were the "home" team and won their second in a row to split the four-game series. They snapped a six-game skid with a rain-delayed victory Saturday in Pittsburgh.

Pirates starter Ivan Nova (11-10) wasn't affected by Saturday's late finish. The team sent him to Williamsport early that day so he'd be rested and ready. And he was. Nova gave up three

runs on eight hits and struck out five in 5 2/3 innings.

He got through a tough stretch in the fourth when St. Louis put two runners on with no outs. Nova struck out Kolten Wong and Randal Grichuk before getting Jose Martinez to ground out.

"No panic, no panic," Nova said. "I was just trying to stay ahead."

Felipe Rivero got three outs for his 14th save in 15 chances. With runners on first and second, Paul DeJong hit a long fly to center field for the final out.

Jedd Gyorko cut Pittsburgh's lead to 3-2 with a two-run homer in the second, his 17th of the season. Wong had an RBI single for St. Louis in the sixth.

The Pirates' bullpen held



Grosse Pointe, Mich.'s players Matthew Greene (5), Tommy Harris (2), and Brandon Campbell (3) sit with Pittsburgh Pirates' Andrew McCutchen (22) in the stands at Lamade Field during a baseball game between Fairfield, Conn., and Lufkin, Texas in United States pool play at the Little League World Series tournament in South Williamsport, Pa. on Sunday.

the Cardinals to two hits after Nova's exit.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

St. Louis players Lance Lynn and Grichuk both starred for their respective Little League teams. Grichuk made back-to-back appearances in the Little League World Series for Richmond, Texas, in 2003 and 2004. Lynn's team from Brownsburg, Indiana, went 0-3 in 1999.

A couple of Pirates also had memories of Williamsport.

Max Moroff was on the Maitland, Florida, team that advanced to the semifinals of the 2005 Little League World Series, and Hurdle spent a year managing the now-defunct Williamsport Bills, then a New York Mets affiliate. He was asked if any of the gear or keepsakes he signed Sunday had a Bills logo on it.

"Not one Williamsport

Bills item has popped up," Hurdle said. "It was a very forgettable year."

The Bills went 60-79 in Hurdle's lone season.

LITTLE LEAGUERS TAKE PART

Little League players took part all night, beginning with the opening pitch.

A player from each team lined up from center field and around the bases to relay the first pitch to Pirates catcher Chris Stewart. Players also relayed lineup cards to officials, answered trivia questions on the field for Xboxes and signed memorabilia. Kids got the best seats in the house — in the front rows and winding around both dugouts.

They also got a chance to take over the stadium public address system, announcing players as they walked to the plate, and were treated to nearly 200 snow cones bought by Cardinals outfielder Tommy Pham.

MARINERS: Diaz notches 28th save of season

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hits and three earned runs in five-plus innings, helping to bolster Seattle's injury riddled rotation.

"He's been huge for us," catcher Mike Zunino said. "We've used a ton of guys this year."

Zunino was part of a disputed play at the plate that help preserve the win for Seattle, which came into the night just 1 1/2 games out of an AL wild-card spot.

With the Braves trailing 6-2 in the sixth, a catcher's

interference call sparked a three-run rally. Ozzie Albies hit a two-run triple over the head of center fielder Leonys Martin and scored on Dansby Swanson's sacrifice fly. Pinch hitter Lane Adams reached on an infield single, stole second and raced for home when an infield dribbler was bobbled by second baseman Robinson Cano.

Cano retrieved the ball and threw home to get Adams. The Braves challenged the call, and it looked as though Adams may have gotten a toe on the plate a

split-second before he was tagged. But the replays, from several different angles, weren't definitive enough to overturn the call.

"That was a great job by Robby not to give up on the play," Zunino said. "That little bobble and recovery may have saved us the game."

Edwin Diaz pitched the ninth for his 28th save. He surrendered a leadoff single to Ender Inciarte, but the Atlanta runner was thrown out attempting to steal second with slugger Freddie

Freeman at the plate.

Freeman grounded out to end the game.

Foltynewicz (10-9) had another rough out for the Braves. He gave up nine hits and all six Seattle runs in 5 2/3 innings, losing for the fourth time in his last five starts.

"A little bit of tough luck early on in the game, and after that I sort of fell behind some people," he said. "It was a tough whole month. I need to regroup and focus a little more and get back out there."



Atlanta Braves Lane Adams is tagged out at home by Seattle Mariners catcher Mike Zunino in the sixth inning of Monday's game in Atlanta.

ECLIPSE: Tennessee Titans players witnessed event after morning practice

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and sat in the grass in front of each dugout. At one point, the sellout crowd chanted, "Let's go science!"

In Nebraska, the Salt-dogs sold game tickets to buyers from as far away as the United Kingdom and Germany, team spokesman Michael Shively said.

One of the Germans was Theo Kleinfeld, 65, who flew to Lincoln last week so he could photograph the eclipse at the Saltdogs' game

against the Gary Southshore Railcats.

Kleinfeld said he watched the 1999 eclipse that crossed Germany and traveled to Shanghai for another in 2009. But in Shanghai, he said, the sky was overcast.

"This is a good opportunity," Kleinfeld said as he set up his camera outside Saltdogs Stadium. "If it doesn't work today, I'll just have to come back in 2024," when the next total solar eclipse in the U.S. will occur.

Paul Kobs, 38, of Minneapolis, took a day off work and drove to Lincoln with his girlfriend. The couple started planning the trip three months ago and picked Lincoln because it was one of the places closest to their home to see the eclipse.

Kobs said they initially planned to drive down to Beatrice, Nebraska, where eclipse viewers gathered at the Homestead National Monument, but the cloudy forecast for that area

persuaded him to stay in Lincoln.

"This was really the easiest place to get to that was in the path of the totality," he said as he walked into the Lincoln stadium. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime event — that minute and a half of experiencing something out of this world."

Jordan Wilson and his wife, Nicole, brought their 5-year-old son, Izayah, to the game to see the eclipse. On the way down from their home in Omaha, the family

sat through bumper-to-bumper traffic on Interstate 80.

"It's probably the last full eclipse we'll see in our lifetimes," he said.

In South Carolina, the Columbia Fireflies celebrated a "Total Eclipse of the Park" event as they hosted the Rome Braves. The Fireflies wore special glow-in-the-dark jerseys that were scheduled to be auctioned after the game, with proceeds benefiting local science,

technology, math and engineering programs.

No Major League Baseball games were scheduled to coincide with the event, but the eclipse caught the interest of teams from other sports preparing for their season openers.

"It was pretty cool to be out there with the rest of the team, looking like 9 o'clock at night at 1:30," said Tennessee Titans linebacker Derrick Morgan, who watched after a practice.

BRONCOS: Lynch disappointed, but vows to continue to get better

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have to compete for your job every day, every week," Siemian said.

Although Joseph declared it a "50-50 competition" this spring, Siemian's edge in experience was a major factor in him pulling away from Lynch, the 26th overall pick in last year's draft.

That's not to say it wasn't a close call, however.

Joseph said there was some debate among the group of decision-makers that included himself, McCoy, QB coach Bill Musgrave, GM John Elway and player personnel director Matt Russell.

"There was discussion because obviously it was a four- to five-month evaluation and when you watch Paxton's physical traits, I mean, they're fun to watch," Joseph said. "So, for a coach, to have a 6-foot-5 guy with a big arm

who can run zone-read and scramble, that's exciting for us. So, it was close."

Lynch showed more comfort with the new scheme and new coaching staff but still proved inadequate at decoding defenses while Siemian was steady and solid, consistently making the correct calls and right reads.

"Obviously I believe in myself to be the starter," Lynch said, his voice cracking. "But the coaches made a decision and that's what we're going with."

While Siemian will get all the attention now, Lynch won't exactly be shunted aside.

"We're all going to support Paxton moving forward," Joseph said. "He's a young player. He's got a bright future still. In my opinion we have two quarterbacks. Most teams can't say that."

Joseph said he wasn't worried that Lynch would

lose focus as the backup.

"Trevor and Paxton are really close. They're buddies. So, I don't foresee him checking out," Joseph said. "We have great coaches on this staff and to keep him involved won't be hard."

Like many fans, Lynch figured he'd be starting by now after Elway moved up in the draft last year to select him, but he said he's pleased with his progress and how he fought for the job this summer and will be ready whenever called upon.

"I really want to get better and not sit around and pout and be upset about this," Lynch said, "because that's not going to make anything better."

Notes: Joseph declared Denver's 2017 first-round pick, LT Garrett Bolles, the starter and said Max Garcia or Allen Barbre will be the LG but that Ron Leary will stay at RG.

SEAHAWKS: Traded for T Matt Tobin from Philadelphia on Monday

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lineman from Boise State stepped in for Fant after his injury and played briefly at left tackle in one game last season. Carroll said Pocic will get a look at the position and Seattle added another option after finishing practice Monday by trading for Matt Tobin from Philadelphia in exchange for a fifth-round pick in 2018. Seattle also received a seventh-round pick next year from the Eagles.

Seattle has used Odhiambo at a variety of guard and tackle spots but only as a backup to this point. He played left tackle exclusively during his college career at Boise State, but has been inconsistent in his limited opportunities with the Seahawks. Offensive line coach Tom Cable was critical of Odhiambo last week prior to the Fant injury.

"He has some moments

where it looks great and some moments where we're like, 'OK we have work to do,'" Cable said.

Odhiambo said Seattle's practice of having its offensive linemen rotate through a variety of positions makes stepping in at left tackle feel familiar.

"You have a lot of guys that could go in there and feel comfortable doing the things," Odhiambo said. "At the same time, the way he coaches us is to know every single spot."

Carroll repeatedly mentioned Joeckel's experience as a left tackle, but reiterated that the goal is to keep Joeckel at left guard. The indication is that moving Joeckel to left tackle would be a fall back plan if Seattle can't find a more definitive answer.

Pocic could be the wild card in the discussion. The rookie from LSU had been primarily playing at right tackle while also backing up

Britt at center, his primary position in college. Pocic projects as more of a tackle in the NFL, but could be thrust into the spot sooner than expected.

"He's already played a little bit of everything for us. That's a possibility," Carroll said. "He's only played there a short time on the left side. He's been primarily a right side guy."

Tobin appears to be an addition for depth. He's played mostly guard during his career, starting 13 games during the 2015 season for the Eagles. But he started at right tackle for the Eagles in their preseason game against Buffalo last week. Seattle also signed free agent Tyrus Thompson on Monday for additional depth.

NOTES: LB K.J. Wright returned to practice after missing last week while having a "process" done to a sore knee. Carroll said Wright would be a full participant Tuesday.