

# Nobach, Vernia Lead Baker to All-State Title

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*By Scott Spruill*

YAKIMA, Wash. -- There was some interesting karma — or whatever you might want to call it — going on in the championship game of Sunday's All-State Baseball Series. Good manners translated into good deeds at the plate, and an unexpected turn of luck led to a stellar pitching display.

Odd things, big results.

Marysville-Pilchuck's Kyle Nobach and Issaquah's Justin Vernia swept the individual awards and led Team Baker's stout pitching and defense to a 7-2 victory over Team Rainier in the title game of the annual senior all-star baseball weekend at Davis Field.

Nobach batted leadoff on Saturday and scored twice and drove in a run while helping Baker defeat Adams 9-3 to earn a spot in the championship game. At the event's banquet that evening, he was the only player among 72 to wear a tie — a non-casual novelty that was pointed out to everyone.

"My grandma made me do it," he smiled. "She thought it was the right thing to do."

Good for you, grandma, because the young man with the tie remained in fine form on Sunday. Nobach led off the game with a double, sparking a four-run first inning, singled in the second and scored in the fourth. For his top-of-the-order performance, Nobach was named the All-State offensive MVP.

"I moved up to batting leadoff this year and I really like it," he said. "I'm usually an aggressive hitter, and I look for any way to get on base and get things started. It's challenging and fun to be in that position."

The only hitch in Nobach's weekend was getting thrown out at home after Sunday's leadoff double. It was a great throw from Kentwood's Tanner Wessling from right field and a nice sweep tag by Archbishop Murphy catcher Alex Galgano. But Nobach, an all-state defensive back on M-P's football team, had a different view.

"I was safe," he said. "It was close but I got in there."

Close was all Vernia was to the All-State Series when invitations went out early last week. He was ranked sixth out of his feeder games and with only the top five getting invites the Issaquah pitcher was made the first alternate. On Thursday a Woodinville player was forced to drop out, and Vernia got a call at school.

"I'm pretty happy about getting that call now," he said. "This worked out well."

Consider Team Baker happy about that call, too.

Vernia struck out the side in the first inning, didn't allow a hit for the first three innings and finished with four scoreless frames and six strikeouts. He left with a 6-0 lead and was named the All-State defensive MVP.

"I knew I was going four innings, so I was excited about striking out the side to start," he said. "I had a nice change-up today and my fastball and curve were OK. To pitch this well against hitters as good as these guys — it couldn't have gone better."

All five local players in the Series were involved in Sunday's consolation game, which was a bizarre contest.

Team Adams didn't manage a hit until the sixth inning and trailed 3-1 heading into the eighth and final frame. But one last chance was all Adams needed as a bunch of gifts and some timely hits produced six runs and a 7-3 victory over Team St. Helens. Three hit batters and a walk helped erase the deficit and a two-run single by Tanner Williams of White River broke the tie.

Davis' Trenton Dupre pitched two hitless innings with three strikeouts for the winners and he singled in the sixth inning and scored Adams' first run. Goldendale's Lucas Denney caught six innings and East Valley's Hunter Hanson played five innings at second base.

For St. Helens, Naches Valley's Koleman Johns pitched two scoreless innings with three strikeouts and Rangers' teammate Ben Wells caught six innings.

#### Championship game

Rainier 000 000 11 — 2 8 2

Baker 400 201 00 — 7 15 1

Clouse, Paulson (4), Russell (8) and Galgano, Kelly (6); Vernia, Thorpe (5) and Mazza.

Highlights — Rainier: Jared Prather (Beamer) 2-4, HR, 2 RBI. Baker: Justin Vernia (Issaquah) 4 IP, 0 runs, 2 hits, 6K; Kyle Nobach (Marysville-Pilchuck) 2-3, 2b, run; Jorgen Arneson (Edmonds-Woodway) 2-3, 2b, SB, run, RBI; Alex Hull (Edmonds-Woodway) 2-3, run, 2 RBI; Michael Mazza (Cascade) 1-4, run, 2 RBI; Oscar Golberg (Columbia River) 2-4.

#### Consolation game

St. Helens 200 001 00 — 3 4 2

Adams 000 001 06 — 7 4 4

Olson, Crippen (3), Johns (5), Beal (7) and Wells, Milyard (7); Brooks, Johnson (4), Dupre (6), Wood (8) and Denney, Hilty (7).

Highlights — St. Helens: Tanner Olson (Lynden) 2 IP, 0 hits, 5K; Russell Crippen (Snohomish) 2 IP, 0 hits; Koleman Johns (Naches Valley) 2 IP, 1 hit, 3K. Adams: Cole Johnson (White River) 2 IP, 1 hit, 3K; Trenton Dupre (Davis) 2 IP, 0 hits, 3K, 1-2, run; Mason Hilty (Richland) 2-3, 2 2b, RBI; Tanner Williams (White River) 1-3, run, 2 RBI.