

San Benito Babe Ruth Bambinos take on VFW Post 9242

'It's all part of getting some exercise, hitting the ball and having fun'

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At Babe Ruth Field in Hollister California's Veterans Park, the crowd's excitement was palpable as two San Benito Bambino teams came together on April 27 in the third game of their season to play the Warriors, composed of the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9242.

As the loudspeakers blasted her entrance music, Joan Jett's "I Love Rock and Roll," Bambino Fay Rendon was preparing for her turn at bat, carrying herself with a confidence that any ball player would admire.

"I think we are going to kill these guys," said Rendon, 19. "We kick [butt] every time. I love coming out here – I feel like a superstar."

The Bambino League, along with the companion program, the Challenger League, is part of a baseball program for players with either intellectual or physical special needs. "They come out and enjoy baseball just like anybody else," said Coach Daniel Gutierrez. "It's all part of getting some exercise, hitting the ball and having fun."

Rendon's words proved prophetic. The 15 players on the team scored run after run while the Warriors seemed to have forgotten even the simplest fundamentals of the game, consistently throwing the ball too late or in the wrong direction – when they could even manage to catch the ball.

The final score of the two-inning contest was 30-0, echoing the results of a game earlier in the day, 24-0 win for two other Bambino teams against the VFW Post members. The Bambinos somehow never suffered a single out, and the Warriors, no matter how many times they crossed the plate, never managed to score a run.

"These kids do a lot of trash-talking," VFW Post Commander Bernie Ramirez said. "But we

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
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WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

have a pretty slow group here. We're getting a little old for this."

To be fair, the game's rules were weighted against the veterans. Each of the two innings does not end until every Bambino has batted. The players are pitched up to six balls, and if none are hit, the ball is placed on a tee. Assistance is available for any player who needs help batting or running the bases.

"Coach Adam Mendolla asked us to come out and play," Ramirez said. "And anybody who's ever played with these kids can feel it in their hearts. It's amazing, just the greatest thing you can do."

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