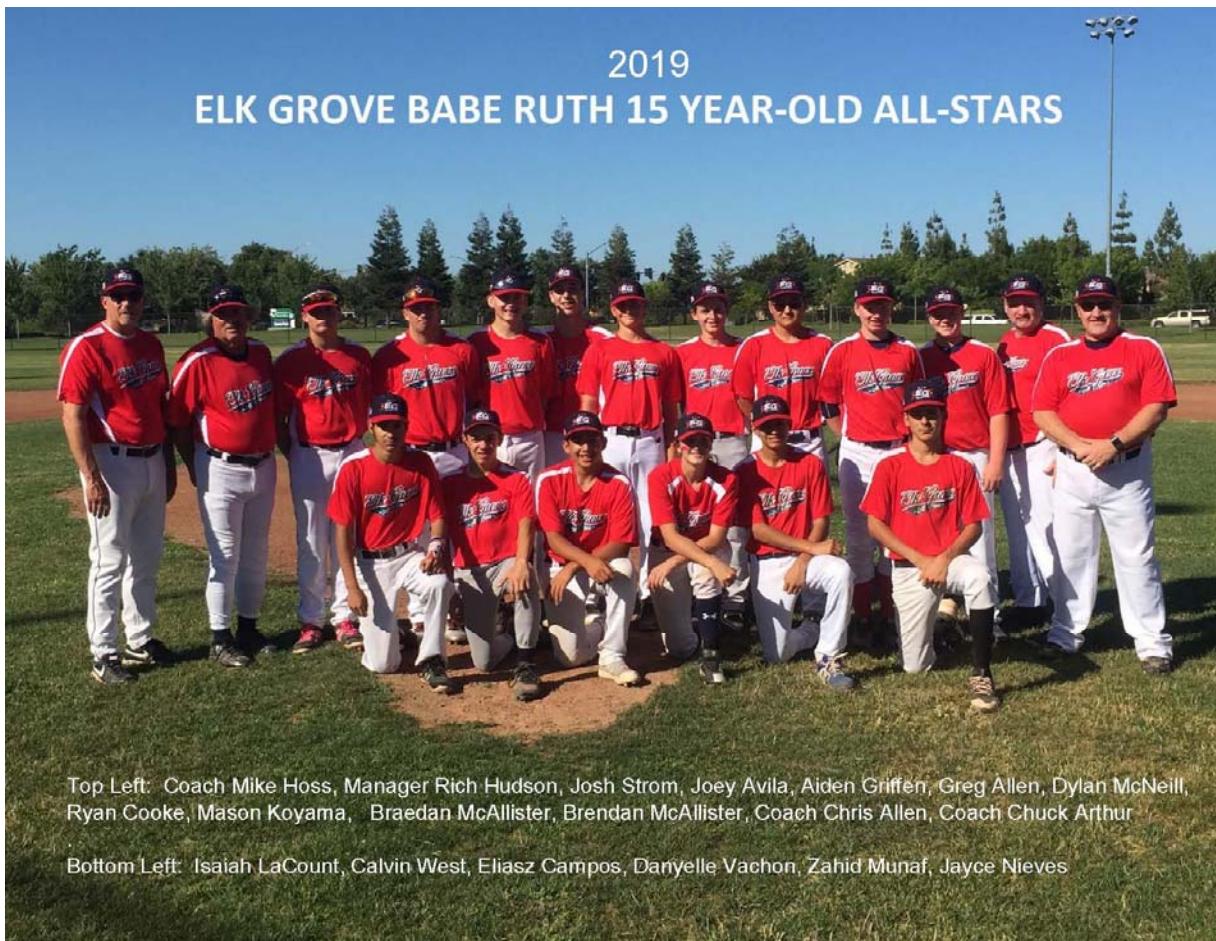


# **ELK GROVE BABE RUTH 15-YEAR-OLD ALL-STARS ADVANCE TO STATE TOURNAMENT ON STRENGTH OF 2 MIRACLE COMEBACK WINS OVER WOODLAND**



Top Left: Coach Mike Hoss, Manager Rich Hudson, Josh Strom, Joey Avila, Aiden Griffen, Greg Allen, Dylan McNeill, Ryan Cooke, Mason Koyama, Braedan McAllister, Brendan McAllister, Coach Chris Allen, Coach Chuck Arthur

Bottom Left: Isaiah LaCount, Calvin West, Eliasz Campos, Danyelle Vachon, Zahid Munaf, Jayce Nieves

The 1967 Boston Red Sox were known as the “Cardiac Kids”. The '67 Sox have nothing on the Plucky team of Elk Grove Babe Ruth 13 to 15 All Stars. This team just started practicing on June 17<sup>th</sup> under Manager Rich Hudson, a former high school and American Legion Coach. Rich Hudson is assisted by veteran coaches: Chris Allen, Chuck Arthur and Mike Hoss. The team was selected from Elk Grove Babe Ruth's 10 teams by the league's coaches and Coach Hudson. The District 7 best 2 out of 3 game play-off was set at Bartholomew Sports Park in Elk Grove against Woodland Babe Ruth All Stars for June 29, 30 and 7/1.

Game one was a slugfest with the teams tied 7-7 after 4 ½ innings with Woodland up in the bottom of the 5<sup>th</sup>. Elk Grove's 7 runs scored on hits by: Zahid Munaf (2 singles), Dylan McNeill (double and single) Calvin West (2 singles) and Jace Nieves (double and single) plus; Danyelle Vachon (hit by pitch) and Elias Campos (reached on an error). In the bottom of the 5<sup>th</sup>, Woodland surged to a 9 run lead after 5 (one short of the 10 run Mercy Rule). The potential 10th runner was tagged out at third on a throw from McNeill to Mason Koyama.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> inning, Elk Grove's comeback started with one out walks to Isaiah LaCount, Zahid Munaf, and Dylan McNeill. Then Aiden Griffen had an RBI single followed by Brenden McAllister, who hit what should have been a sacrifice fly but was missed by the left fielder allowing 2 runs to score. 16-10 now. Mason Koyama walked to re-load the bases and Calvin West was hit by a pitch. 16-11. Then a 2 RBI single by Jayce Nieves and walks by Josh Strom and Isaiah LaCount made it 16-14. Still down by 2 runs, Elk Grove turned to their catcher, Joey Avila, to shut the Woodland power machine down from the mound. Joey struck out the first batter but the clean up hitter sent a high fly ball to deep right field that Calvin West made a great catch on to stop a Woodland rally before it began. Avila struck out the 5<sup>th</sup> batter in the order.

Still 2 runs down, Elk Grove went to work in the top of the last inning. Dylan McNeill started it with a double to center and Aiden Griffen followed with a double also, so it was a 1 run lead. But then 2 straight outs. Followed by walks to Greg Allen and Calvin West, bases loaded. Jayce Nieves is up and is 3 for 4 at this point in the game. He hits a hard ground ball toward the hole at second but the Woodland 2<sup>nd</sup> baseman fields it and tries to throw Jayce out at first to end the game. The hurried throw gets by the first baseman and the tying and go ahead runs score. The EG dugout goes wild! EG had speed on the bases with Calvin West at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Jayce Nieves at 1<sup>st</sup>. The batter takes a strike as Jayce does a delayed steal to 2<sup>nd</sup>, but he stops over halfway to the base. Finally, Woodland tries to catch him stealing and Calvin West breaks for the plate. Woodland is not able to tag Jayce before the run scores to put Elk Grove up by a score of 18-16.

Woodland still has the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> but Joey Avila won't allow them a chance. He strikes out all three Woodland batters on swing and miss strike 3's.

The Woodland squad was a formidable hitting team. Leadoff hitter Peyton Parker had an on base % of .700 in the tournament. Middle of the order hitters Matthew Jurado and Coby Witten had 4 hits each including a double for each player. In game one, each spot in the lineup scored at least one run.

The Elk Grove squad features some great players including Danyelle "Dany" Vachon. What research was possible shows that Dany is the first female ball player to make the EGBR 15-year-old all-stars. There have been other good female ball players in this league which started in 1962 as the Elk Grove Boys Baseball League but none who have played on this All-Star Team. Dany started game one at first base. As a defensive substitute in game 2, she

made a play at first base that not only kept a wide throw from getting into the right field corner with runners on but managed, with a good stretch and pickup out of the dirt, to get the out. Coach Chuck Arthur described that play as “game saving”.

Elk Grove’s stirring victory in Game 1 of the series set up Game 2 with a chance to close out the series in game 2.

If you think game one was a tense game, the second game was just as exciting. Elk Grove got off to a 1 run lead in the bottom of the first, on a walk to Zahid Munaf and 2 out single to Brendan McAllister. Joey Avila’s double scored Zahid Munaf. Dylan McNeill started pitching and pitched 3 innings of no hit no run baseball. Meanwhile, in the second inning, Ryan Cooke singled and Jayce Nieves doubled to drive in the second run. In the fourth inning, Dylan McNeill started to give up some hits. Woodland scored 3 runs on 5 hits before Brendan McAllister came in to get the third out. Ryan Cooke started off the bottom of the 4<sup>th</sup> with a single, then with one out Calvin West and Eliasz Campos both singled to push in the tying run. With two out Dylan McNeill singles and Aiden Griffen doubles resulting in 3 more runs scoring. At 6 to 3 it looks pretty good, right? Wrong! Elk Grove gives up 3 straight hits to Woodland and a walk to score a run. Joey Avila is called in to pitch. Bases loaded and Joey gets the strike out for the first out. Then he gets what looks like a double play ball to second but the toss to the Short Stop covering second is high and Elk Grove gets nobody out. Woodland goes on to score 10 runs in that inning, moving Elk Grove from up 3 runs to down 7 runs. That is where the game stood after 5 full innings. One of the Elk Grove fans was heard to exclaim “We have got them right where we want them.” With timely hitting from Calvin West, Zahid Munaf, Aiden Griffen and a double by Mason Koyama, Elk Grove stormed back in the 6<sup>th</sup> with 5 runs.

Still, a 13 to 11 lead for Woodland going to the top of the 7<sup>th</sup>. Mason Koyama continued to pitch and with the help of Dany Vachon’s defense noted above, and another play on a hard grounder hit right at her, Woodland only managed one more run. Greg Allen came in to pitch and get the final out but the extra run put the score at 14-11 Woodland going to the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup>. Ryan Cooke led off for EG and hit a ball through the shortstop. Jayce Nieves followed with a high fly ball to Center that dropped in for a hit. Then, with one out, Josh Strom delivers a pinch-hit double to right, scoring one more run. After 2 outs Dylan McNeill singled and suddenly it was a one run game 14-13 Woodland. Aiden Griffen supplied the tying run with a single that also sent McNeill to third base. With Brenden McAllister in the batter’s box, Aiden Griffen draws the pickoff throw and breaks for second. By the time

the first baseman makes the hurried throw home, Dylan McNeill slides in with series winning run and gets mobbed by his teammates pouring out of the dugout.

Elk Grove gets 2 nail biting comebacks after 5 innings down by 9 and 7 runs respectively. Elk Grove moves on to the State Tournament in Belmont, California with a game Saturday July 6, 1pm at the Belmont Sports Complex off highway 101. For more information about all three Elk Grove All Star teams going to State Tournaments visit [www.eghardball.com](http://www.eghardball.com). Fall Ball information for 12-16-year-olds is also available on that website.