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LITTLE LEAGUE



Ahwatukee All Star 9- and 10-year-old Little League coach Mike Mettner pumps up his team before the start of the fifth inning against Chandler Wednesday night. [Darryl Webb/AFN]

VOLLEYBALL

Shaping the future

Group of Ahwatukee volleyball players help win national title

By Jason P. Skoda
AHWATUKEE FOOTHILLS NEWS

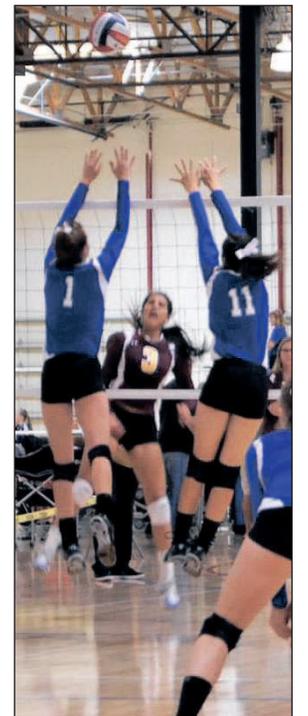
Sharon Vanis knows what happened in Columbus, Ohio, just might come back to haunt her someday.

The Hamilton girls volleyball coach took a group of young players from the Aspire's 14N Black squad to the USA Volleyball Junior National Championships and came back with an American division national title.

A good portion of the Aspire's 14N Black squad hail from Ahwatukee and will be headed to Desert Vista if not already enrolled.

The experience they gained by playing in a national event against some elite talent is only going to further their careers and pump up their confidence to perform in big moments later in their careers. "I told (Desert Vista) coach (Molly) West that I was going to mess with their footwork and make them hit with their left hand," Vanis said with a laugh. "I know it is probably going to come back to haunt me, but this is why we are in coaching — to make kids better."

Vanis, who led the Huskies to a 33-9 record before losing in the Division I state quarterfinals last fall, has no qualms about helping Ahwatukee players like opposite hitter Erin Gilbert, outside hit-



The Aspire's 14N Black, in blue, won a national title in Columbus last week with several Ahwatukee Foothills residents as major contributors. [Submitted photo]

ter Hailey Harward, middle blocker Rachael Kramer; libero Brianna Larkin, setter Lilly Nelson and middle blocker Alexis Whittington.

"When you have a passion for coaching you don't care who they play for down the line," she said. "You want to develop players when you have them. Believe me when they were all in a dog pile after winning it all none of that mattered."

Vanis was impressed with the way the team kept its composure in the finals against Blackswamp out of Ohio.

"If you were just watching
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And then there was 1

By Jason P. Skoda
AHWATUKEE FOOTHILLS NEWS

The Ahwatukee Little League had one shot left Wednesday night of making it to the finals of the District 13 tournament after two defeats in the semifinals already in the books.

Let's hear it for the little guys.

The 9- and 10-year-old team got the job done in securing at least one ALL team in the District 13 finals yet again by beating Chandler National North 8-5 at

Ahwatukee Little League has one team left in District 13 finals

Tempe Sports Complex.

The next step is tonight at 7 p.m. against Chandler National South, the only team to beat ALL in this tournament.

"We made the plays we needed and hit like we always do," manager Mike Mettner said. "Now we are playing for the District 13 title. Can't ask for anything more than that."

ALL led the semifinal game from the start, grabbing a 5-1 advantage and expanded on it after CNLL North closed with in 5-4 after four innings.

"We want a shot at (CNLL South) so we knew we had to win this one," Corbin Mettner said. "We had our chance last time and couldn't finish it."

In the opening game of the

tournament, ALL led CNLL South by four runs in the sixth and final inning but couldn't hold the lead.

"When we lost our first game, our coaches talked about how we had to finish games," player Colby Grennan said. "Hopefully it turns out different this time."

The other ALL teams don't have that luxury after coming up short in the semifinals.

The 10- and 11-year-old squad
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