

Huntington Beach Starts Hot

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High school baseball is well underway in most southern states and the 2012 season is no exception when it comes to early surprises. While the top-ranked and traditional power programs in California are off to good starts, Huntington Beach High has already grabbed some headlines by starting 5-0 and winning the highly-competitive Newport Elks Tournament.

"It's a pretty good feeling," head coach Benji Medure said. "We caught everybody off guard including ourselves. We were just a normal team a couple weeks ago. Beating (Bishop) Amat and Mater (Dei) put us on the map."

Facing La Puente's Bishop Amat High and Santa Ana's Mater Dei High at any point is a tall task, but the Oilers caught the juggernauts in their second and third game of the season. They proved worthy of the challenge beating Bishop Amat 3-2 and Mater Dei 8-1. Bishop Amat won the Division IV Southern Section title in 2011, beating Palm Desert High. Incidentally, Huntington Beach faced Palm Desert just a few days later and defeated the Aztecs 5-2. Medure says their success has come from an unexpected source.

"Surprisingly, pitching has been our strength so far," he said. "I knew we had solid pitchers, but didn't count on them doing as well as they have. Plus we've been playing good defense. I knew that was going to be good. We've been getting the strikeout and double play in key situations because our pitching has been keeping the ball down."

Medure, who has major league alumni in Tigers right-hander Collin Ballester and Angels catcher Hank Conger, said the key for the Oilers moving forward is consistency.

"Obviously, it's baseball and anything can happen," he added. "If we stay consistent we'll be fine. The question is are we going to be able to overcome the little bump in the road?"

Seniors Christian Abe and Shane Grace have led the pitching staff. Abe, a right-hander, is 2-0, 2.33 in 12 innings pitched. Grace, a lefty, is also 2-0 and has yet to give up a run in 11 innings while also recording a save. Adam Daymude a catcher/outfielder, is hitting just .267, but he's made his hits count as three of the four are home runs. Sophomore infielder Jesse Kuet is hitting .538 with seven RBIs.