

Seraphs Cool It For CIF Triumph, 7-4

By TONY JOSEPH

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Most kids are pretty nervous before their first CIF baseball playoff game, but some forget the stakes when they take the field while others bring their nerves out with them.

That difference may have been the big difference here yesterday when St. Bonaventure High met Arroyo Grande in the opening round of the "AA" division playoffs. Whatever was wrong with the Eagles, the Seraphs kept their cool in blistering heat at the Cal Poly diamond and marched to a 7-4 victory that lifted them quickly into the semifinals against Temple City at Ventura College on Tuesday.

The Eagles made seven errors, far too many to get away with against an opportunistic team like the Seraphs, who cashed in on five of them to score five unearned runs. Arroyo Grande scored all of its runs without benefit of an error, although the Eagles almost got back into the game because of the only Seraph error, a dropped popup in the infield.

The Eagles trailed, 7-0, when they scored four in the sixth inning, on three singles and a walk. In the seventh inning, the first two batters made out, but John Reed and Paul Tremper drew walks off St. Bonaventure pitcher Jerry Stone. Leadoff batter Andy Geremia, who already had a single and a long fly out, popped one up along third, and with Stone and two teammates converging, the ball dropped to load the bases. The pressure was — for the first time in the game — on the Seraphs, but they kept their cool and on a slow roller to second, second baseman Ron Romo charged the ball, picked

it up and pranced across second for the force play to end the game.

It was a tough play, especially under the circumstances, but the Seraphs had plenty of practice all day charging ground balls, since Stone's curve was breaking down and away from Arroyo Grande hitters, who topped the ball several times.

Stone, who said afterwards he had tired after the fifth inning because of the heat, never tired at the plate, collecting four hits, all solid liners to the right side of the diamond. It was Stone's first hit, coupled with the first Eagle error of the game, that gave St. Bonaventure a 1-0 lead in the first inning. Romo had walked to open the inning, and moved to second on a stolen base when Stone came to the plate. Arroyo Grande lefty pitcher Julian Brownlee served up a slow curve that Stone whacked up the middle. Romo would have stopped at third, but the centerfielder let the ball go through him and Romo came home. The next two batters fanned, so it was a costly error.

Arroyo Grande made two errors in the second inning and got off the hook, but in the third, two more errors produced four runs, and enabled the Seraphs to break the game open. Romo started that rally with a walk, too, and O'Neill was safe at first when his popup was dropped in the infield. Stone then cracked a ground-rule double along the right field foul line that got past a rather shoddy outfield fence to drive in Romo. Mark Stephenson, Stone's battery mate, hit a pitch up the alley in left for a double to drive in two more runs and then kicked the ball out of the third baseman's glove for an error to save himself from a sure putout at third.

After a popup, Larry Montag lined a double to left to score Stephenson with another unearned run.

The Eagles set down their opponents in order in the fourth, but went back to their old fielding ways in the fifth. Stone singled to lead off the inning, and Stephenson was safe on a fielder's choice. Kevin Kelly, trying to sacrifice, bunted to the pitcher, who threw the ball wildly to first base, sending Stephenson to second.

After another strikeout, Mike McLean beat out a slow roller which would have loaded the bases, except that the third baseman threw the ball away for another error, which let Stephenson and Kelly march in to score.

That Stone was tiring became painfully evident to the many sun-drenched Seraph rooters in attendance. In the sixth inning, John Howells opened with a walk, and after a strikeout, Geremia, Kenny Banks and Ron Gillespie followed with hard singles. Banks drove in one run and Gillespie two. Clean-up hitter Frank Landini topped one over the mound that deflected off Stone's glove, but was picked up by shortstop Jerry Bingham, who made a fine play to get the out at first, with Gillespie taking third. A passed ball brought in the run, but Bingham came up with another good play on a slow roller to end the inning.

Stone, who fanned four batters, walked three and gave up five hits. The Seraphs struck out 10 times off two Arroyo Grande pitchers.

St. Bonaventure Coach Bill Little plans to use Stone again Tuesday.

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Stone and Stephenson; Brownlee, J. Porter (6) and Mana, Tremper (7).