

# Sports



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## Our Athletes

# Summer standouts

## Post 72 returns to the Legion postseason and battles Danbury in a pitcher's duel

By JOHN GORALSKI  
SPORTSWRITER

Danbury's ace looked every bit like a pitcher bound for UConn-Avery Point as he kept Southington batters off the bases in the first round of the American Legion play-in tournament. The former high school standout struck out eight and allowed just one base runner through six innings of play.

"He wasn't a thrower. He was a pitcher," said Southington coach Jim Gugliotti, "and I don't think we've faced a pitcher like him all year. He moved the ball in and out, up and down. He had a good breaking ball, a good off-speed pitch. He was excellent, and it seemed like his fast ball was better at the end of the game than it was at the beginning."

### Baseball

On Tuesday, July 20, Danbury defenders were leaning heavily on the best arm in their rotation, but Southington Post 72 had a few surprises of their own. Alex Roger had entered the season without throwing a single pitch on the high

I actually had fun coming to the ball park. I knew that they'd show up when I showed up. We would battle. We'd play hard, and we'd have fun. That's exactly what we did this year.

Jim Gugliotti,  
Southington American Legion baseball coach

First Round July 20  
Danbury 2  
Southington 1

school field, but Southington's ace was matching Danbury's pitch for pitch.

"We didn't know that Alex could pitch [at the start of the season]," said Gugliotti. "We knew he had a good arm, and we were told that, at times, he could pitch, but I

didn't know that he could do the things he did."

Roger was at the top of a long list of surprises as Southington returned to the postseason after a three-year hiatus. He drew the coaches' attention with a 15-strikeout no-hitter against Winsted in the early season. He followed with an eight-inning relief appearance during a 14-inning victory over Terryville. He entered the postseason with a 3-0 record, but Roger saved his best



JOHN GORALSKI

Brian Thompson drives the baseball into right field during a 2-1 loss to Danbury in the American Legion postseason.

for last.

"I'm not a pitcher. I just go out there and try to do my best no matter who we're facing," he told

reporters after the game. "I've got a good arm for the outfield, and

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# Lady Knights hit the volleyball and the books

## State champs claim academic award for 8th straight year

By JOHN GORALSKI  
SPORTSWRITER

The Lady Knight volleyball team has earned a postseason berth seven times in the last eight seasons. In 2009, the girls rallied to the program's first state championship. With all their accolades on the court, something's got to give. Right? Not so fast...

### Volleyball

For the eighth year in a row, the Lady Knights have been selected as recipients of the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Game Plan Team Academic Award. It's the longest streak in the state.

"Great kids produce great results," said Southington coach Rich Heitz. "I've been fortunate over my time at Southington—and Wethersfield previously—to have a lot of nice and bright kids gravitate toward the sport."

The award was initiated in the 1992-93 academic year,



VINNY ROSSITTO

The Southington High School girls volleyball team received a national academic award from the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

and it honors collegiate and high school volleyball teams that display excellence in the classroom during the school year. Teams must maintain at least a 3.30 grade-point average on a 4.0 scale or a 4.10 cumulative team GPA on a 5.0 scale to be considered.

"There is no better way to gauge the success of a sport than to track the accomplishments of the people who participate," said AVCA Executive Director Kathy DeBoer. "Each of these 450 teams represents 12-15 really smart kids. What a

great day for the sport of volleyball."

Of the 450 teams selected, 164 were recognized at the high school level. Southington is one of three Connecticut programs to be honored.

"Last year, it was us,

We've been recognized for sportsmanship a few times. That's the triple-crown — sportsmanship, championships, and academics. It's something that we like to strive for.

Rich Heitz,  
Southington girls volleyball coach

Darien, and Taft. This year it's us, Taft, and Bloomfield. I think it's a nice recognition that the American Volleyball Coaches Association puts out to their high school and college coaches who are members of the association," Heitz said. "I think that, when you see new schools like Bloomfield on the list, that shows their membership is reaching a little bit further each year."

Heitz credits his team for their ability to balance their schoolwork and studies with the challenging varsity schedule. The coach said that he's proud of his team for working toward solid goals.

"We've been recognized for sportsmanship a few times," Heitz said. "That's the triple crown—sportsmanship, championships, and academics. It's something that we like to strive for."