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Mariners' Tim Vara, 12, right, slides in for a run against Yankees' pitcher Jimmy Gardner, 11, after a wild pitch during opening day of Little League at the 37-plus acre Greece Little League Complex on Saturday morning.

KRIS J. MURANTE staff photographer

# Greece youths step up to plate

## Little League teammates learn skills of our 'national pastime'

### ALANNA STAGE

STAFF WRITER

**GREECE** — Grant Tomasso has been a member of the Brewers in Greece Little League for four seasons.

A 12-year-old seventh-grader at Odyssey Academy, Grant also plays on his school's modified team.

Aaron Contestabile is an 11-year-old fifth-grader at Brookside Elementary School on Long Pond Road. He has played baseball since he was 6, but is new to the Brewers this season.

Grant and Aaron don't care too much about their differences, though. They both like baseball and like to work hard for a fun team.

"It's just like a family, and we just treat new players like they have been with us the whole time," Grant said.

On Saturday, they played their first game as teammates as the Greece Little League opened its 54th season, providing another opportunity for boys and girls to meet and make friends.

Little League is more than an opportunity to learn the skills of a game that is known as our national pastime. Just as the 37-plus acres of the Greece Little League complex are more than just fields and dugouts.



KRIS J. MURANTE staff photographer

**The Little League Brewers' team takes a lap around the outfield to warm up before the first game of the season Saturday. Twelve hundred boys and girls register annually.**

"The kids teach each other a lot of stuff," said Kevin Contestabile, 43, Aaron's father. "He's new to the team, and the kids really took him in. It's a sign of some really good parenting."

Parents are as critical as bats to Little League programs. From coaching to managing to general

volunteer duties, the league looks to parents for help keeping the 1,200 Greece youths who register yearly organized.

Phil Tomasso, 37, Grant's father, has worked as an assistant with the Brewers for four years.

"It's always positive," he said. "We teach them the game, but it's

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never about getting too hard on the kids."

Baseball is just one aspect of Aaron's life. He is a Boy Scout, enjoys camping and science and plays the cello for the school orchestra.

"I like practices, playing catch and just talking to everyone," Aaron said.

"I like that at second base you have to do a lot of stuff, and (in the) outfield, people depend on you to catch the pop flies."

Grant is enjoying the best of both of his baseball worlds.

"Modified is a lot harder than this," he said. "Little League got me my basic skills, and now that I play modified, it's helping me with Little League."

The Brewers ended up dropping their game to the Tigers 4-1, but there were no sad faces in the dugout. "No matter how we do with this team, we always have fun, and that's what I really like," Grant said. □

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