

HOVAL ROCKS PRINCETON

By RED BIRCH

Staff Writer

nings to make the early ending all but inevitable.

PRINCETON — The Hopewell Valley High baseball team has gone from the back seat to the driver's seat this sea-

son.

Coming off an 11-12 season a year ago, the Bulldogs dropped their first three games of 2009 and four of their first five.

But coach Kenny Harrison's team

righted the ship after that.

So much so that when Hopewell de-

feated Princeton, 11-1, in five innings

yesterday, it secured no worse than a

share of the Colonial Valley Conference

Patriot Division title. It will be the

Bulldogs' first league crown since

2005, Harrison's first year as its head

coach.

"We've been down for a few years, so

this is a nice accomplishment," Harri-

son said. "We expected to be very com-

petitive this season, and even though

we lost a few close games at the start,

the guys were never down and out."

The biggest change for Hopewell Val-

ley, which is 16-6 overall and will head

to Ocean Township in NJSIAA Central

Jersey Group III action tomorrow, is

its hitting.

That was in abundance yesterday as

the Bulldogs smacked nine hits and

scored 11 runs all in the first three in-

Add in the team's continued strong

pitching as Travis Gerstacker and Tim

Wolf combined on a five-hitter, and it is

easy to see why Hopewell locked up at

least a share of the Patriot crown. The

Bulldogs (12-5 in the league) could win

the title outright if Ewing (13-6, 11-5)

is unable to defeat Colonial Division

champ Steiner (24-3, 14-2) at 11 a.m.

Saturday.

"It's really exciting," Hopewell Val-

ley junior outfielder Ben Meer said.

"This was a goal we had up on the bul-

letin board in our locker room since the

beginning of the season even after our

0-3 start."

Meer, who went 2-for-3 and drove in

three runs versus the Little Tigers (4-

18), was a prime example of the Bull-

dogs' newfound confidence at the plate.

"I'm feeling better in there," said

Meer, who struggled along with his

teammates, in the beginning of the sea-

two-strike approach. "Harrison said of

his team's earlier troubles at the plate,

"They were striking out too much early

in the year. Now they are all doing a

much better job."

Princeton tried to show its improved

hitting as well after leadoff hitter Nick

Miranda opened the bottom half of the

first with a single. But the Little Tig-

ers, who won three more games than

Cleanup hitter Alex Mottle, who bats

and a two-run single in the second.

Meer broke yesterday's game open

with an RBI triple in the first inning

are falling in."

Game ended by 10-run rule.

E-Hoffman, Haring 2, DP-Hopewell Valley 1,

Princeton 1, LOB-Hopewell Valley 4, Princeton 5,

2B-Mottle, Hoffman, Ehnerton, 3B-Meer, SF-Mor-

ris, SB-Sorg, Miranda

HOPWELL VALLEY

IP H R ER BB SO

Gerstacker W 4-0 4:0 5 1 1 2 4

Wolf 1:0 0 0 0 0 1

PRINCETON

IP H R ER BB SO

Powell L 1-6 2:1 8 11 10 4 2

Hoffman 1:2 1 0 0 0 1

Alvarez 1:0 0 0 0 0 0

HBP-by Powell (Sorg)

AB R BI

HOPWELL

AB R BI

PRINCETON

Player	AB	R	BI
Sorg cf	1	3	12
McGraw ph	1	0	0
Chawla ph-ct	1	0	0
Miranda cf	1	3	12
Hoffman 2b-p	3	1	1
Palin c	3	1	1
Prone ph	1	0	0
Banziz 1b-3b	1	0	0
Eisenrath ph	3	1	0
Cignarella 2b	3	1	0
Mottle 1b	1	1	1
Barsam dh-rf	1	1	1
Meer rf	3	0	2
Powell p	3	0	2
Fuchs c	3	0	0
Cathena 3b	3	0	0
Patrick lf	3	2	2
Alviz r-f-bp	3	2	2
Wiedner ph	2	1	0
Br. Miller dh	2	1	0
Gerstacker p	0	0	0
Wolf p	0	0	0
Haring lf	0	0	0
Bradley ss	3	2	2
Shmitt 3b-2b	3	2	2
Totals	24	11	9
Hopewell Valley (16-6)	254	00	11
Princeton (4-18)	010	00	1

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— BEN MEER

"We have a good junior class coming

up just like they do," Princeton junior

shortstop Steve Ehnerton said. "It's

hard to be playing our last game, but it

was also a lot of fun. For that reason, it

was like our worst game and our best

game at the same time."

Ehnerton made the most with a sin-

gle and a double on the day versus Ger-

stacker. Even though Eric Hoffman

also doubled, the Little Tigers could

not mount any more offense than the

run they scored when one-out singles

by Steven Fuchs and Ehnerton sand-

wiched a walk to Matt Alvarez before

Colby Haring grounded into a fielder's

choice in the second inning.

By then, however, Hopewell was al-

ready in the driver's seat, leading, 7-1.