



By Jan Schultz The Imperial Republican

An experience of a lifetime.

That's what Imperial 14-year-old Josie Peterson and her family experienced this week in Minneapolis at Major League Baseball's 85th All-Star Game events.

It was on Monday as part of those All-Star Game activities that the Chase County Schools sophomore won a national Pitch, Hit and Run (PHR) title.

Josie won the girls' age 13-14 division, going up against two other national qualifiers from California and Texas.

"It's really cool," Josie said Tuesday when asked what a national title feels like.

It's more than cool, when a person considers she became just one of eight national winners from a group of 625,000 youths who started the PHR competition at local contests across the country this spring.

"And, I'm super excited for all of the rest of the FanFest events," she added, that were on the family's schedule Tuesday.

All of the finalists made a special trip to T-Mobile All-Star FanFest, an interactive baseball theme park and the largest baseball fan event in the world.

Among the FanFest attractions were an exhibit from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, batting cages, clinics from Major League legends, free autograph sessions with former Twins and others and more.

Enjoying the events with Josie were her parents, Bruce and Crystal, and siblings Trevor, Morgan and Jaret.

Monday's events preceded attendance at Tuesday night's MLB All-Star Game at the Minnesota Twins' Target Field, where Josie and Bruce watched the American League Team defeat the National League Team, 5-3. They had two seats up high above left field, part of Josie's perks as a national PHR qualifier.

Josie said she felt she had a good performance in the Pitch, Hit and Run competition on Monday.

Like in the team championships at Coors Field in Denver where she qualified for nationals, Josie hit all six of the pitching zones again, as she hurled a softball at the MLB strike zone.

"That really helped," she said.

In the batting portion, she said she had good distance on all three tries, although the ball veered off the line a bit more than she would have liked.

The running portion was about the same, she said. Girls run from between second and third base to home, trying to tally the fastest time.

In the end, her total points bested the other two in her division.

She received a huge trophy topped by a baseball that was hauled home with a lot of other MLB All-Star Game memorabilia.

But the Pitch, Hit and Run competition was just a part of the events Monday and Tuesday.

At Monday night's Homerun Derby Contest, she was in the outfield shagging balls for the unsuccessful homerun attempts. All 24 PHR finalists were able to do that.

"I didn't get the chance to catch a fly ball. I always seemed to be out of the area" where they fell, she said.

A highlight that night, too, was meeting some MLB greats like retired pitchers Rollie Fingers and John Smoltz. They also witnessed New York Yankee great Derek Jeter's last All-Star Game as he retires from baseball this year.

Also at events Tuesday night, all 24 PHR finalists were introduced to the fans in pregame ceremonies, and each youth's image was shown on the big screen above the outfield seats.

The Peterson family returned to Imperial Wednesday, not just with a lot of MLB souvenirs but with memories that will last a lifetime.