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## Bayside comes back on Stevenson in 12-inning, playoff epic

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There was just one PSAL softball playoff game that got in Tuesday afternoon through the rain – and it was an all-time classic.

No. 12 Bayside came back from five runs down in the bottom of the 11th inning to tie the game and eventually beat No. 21 Adlai Stevenson, 9-8, on a Tara Bernstein sacrifice fly in the bottom of the 12th in the first round Tuesday afternoon in Queens.

After almost four hours of softball, with the clock creeping toward 8 p.m. and darkness setting in, Bayside's Taylor Moy just beat the throw from Stevenson center fielder Ashley Tineo to keep the Commodores' season alive and cap an epic contest.

"It was that kind of day," Stevenson coach Rick Ouimet said. "It was like a perfect game. [Bayside coach] Steve [Piorkowski] and I were saying it's the most exciting softball game we've ever seen."

The Ambassadors (6-8) thought they broke things open in the 11th when Ashlyn Concepcion ripped a two-RBI triple, Leesage Perez drove in a run on a suicide squeeze and Darien Cruz followed with an RBI double. They had finally gotten to Commodores starter Kaitlyn Klein and their starter, knuckleballer Karissa Core, was giving Bayside (9-5) fits.

But when his team got back to the dugout after going down 8-3, Piorkowski installed a basketball strategy, looking toward chipping away at the lead – score two runs with none out, two with one out and two more with two outs to win the game.

It almost happened exactly like that. Gloria Li had an RBI double, Jackie Perno scored Li on run-scoring fielder's choice and Soribel Paulino had an RBI triple. After a Stevenson error on a Caterina Faraci grounder, Klein drove her in with a single to tie things up. Klein was able to wiggle out of a second-and-third, no-out jam in the top of the 12th to help preserve it.

"The tying it up was the most surreal part of it," Piorkowski said. "You just really get a sense that the game was over. After scoring three runs the entire game, to have to get five to tie just seems so insurmountable."

Bayside, which will play the No. 5 Wagner-No. 28 Lincoln winner Friday if weather permits, also came back to beat Francis Lewis, seeded fourth in the PSAL, last week. The Commodores, which feature eight freshmen and 14 new players on the roster, are playing with all kinds of confidence right now.

"They know they can compete with anyone," Piorkowski said. "Someone like Wagner is not going to intimidate them at all. They're just going to go at it. It should be fun."

Bayside tied the game at 2 in the sixth and tied it again at 3 in the 10th before touching Core up in the 11th. With a lob pitcher in the circle, Ouimet shifted his outfield over toward left and the defense worked perfectly until that juncture when the Commodores began finding the gaps.

"They made defensive plays that I thought I was playing Tottenville," Piorkowski said. "I'm not teasing about that. He does a great job with his defense."

Ouimet was proud to have gone toe to toe with traditionally one of the best softball programs in the city. He thinks the result bodes well for the other teams from his borough who finished below .500 like Riverdale/Kingsbridge and Lehman.

"It shows The Bronx is tough this year," Ouimet said.

Bayside is pretty darn tough, too. Before the game, Piorkowski brought his players to a new trophy case called Commodores Corner adjacent to the school's gym that has all the softball hardware.

"You see that? Those are earned," he told them "We'll see what you guys earn today."

They earned not just a spot in the second round, but some memories that will probably last a lifetime.

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