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THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS



Helping Hands

**Kasey Parente and friends
drive Bayside toward playoffs, Pages 4-5**

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SOFTBALL

Super sophs

Improving youngsters, senior Parente fuel postseason drive

BY TONY BELLISSIMO

Bayside softball coach Stephen Piorkowski began the season with an eye on the future when he handed starting jobs to five sophomores.

Little did he know they'd rally around senior standout Kasey Parente and help the Commodores challenge for the Queens A title and secure a 10th consecutive playoff appearance.

"I never go into a season thinking we don't have a chance to go far," Piorkowski said. "Everyone has expectations on returning players and we only have a few. Young teams make a lot of mistakes and we've made our share, but we've come a long way in six weeks and so many positive things are happening."

Bayside, which has reached the PSAL semifinals six times in nine seasons, has a legitimate shot to get there again with sophomores Nicole Marra, Cadie Chu, Danielle Brustmeyer, Tai Ann Bishop and Mariel Perez making large contributions. Last spring was a struggle, as it went 8-7 against division rivals and failed to win a playoff game for the first time since 1997.

"Last year was such a disappointment because we did so well in 2004," Parente said after

Kasey Parente started as a shortstop for Bayside and has blossomed into a quality pitcher and veteran leader on a young team.





PHOTOS BY PATRICK MCCARTHY

the Commodores improved to 10-2 in Queens A with a victory over Benjamin Cardozo on May 12. "I wasn't so sure how we'd bounce back because of all the young players. But they've really stepped up. I'm really proud of them."

Parente has taken her game to another level since joining the team as a sophomore shortstop. She learned how to pitch from the ground-up under the watchful eye of Piorkowski, who has been developing windmillers for as long as he can remember.

"I heard so much about coach before I came to Bayside," said Parente, who has started every division game and allowed only 46 hits and 22 earned runs (1.83 ERA) in 84 innings while striking out 103. "When I started throwing [from the circle], I never thought I'd get to a level where I'd start a real game."

Now she's dominating them, not only in the circle but at the

Terry Yip took over the catcher position last season and grew into a top hitter and invaluable resource for Kasey Parente behind the plate.

plate. She's batting .465 with 16 RBI and 13 runs scored.

"Kasey's control has taken a 180-degree turn since last year," Piorkowski said. "She can throw four different pitches for strikes. She's worked hard and is having an awesome all-around season."

Junior Terry Yip, who had zero experience as a catcher prior to assuming the starting job midway through last season, has been invaluable. "Terry's improved as a hitter and is extremely important to Kasey's

success as a pitcher," Piorkowski said.

Marra (shortstop), Chu (first base) and Brustmeyer (third base) joined senior Alishia Vansalisbury to form the starting infield, while Bishop and Perez patrol the outfield with junior Angela Mohamed. Designated hitter Aisha Nuriddin (two homers, four steals) adds offensive punch and speed. "It took a little while to figure out where everyone would fit in the puzzle," Piorkowski said.

The Commodores won nine straight after opening with a one-run defeat to Richmond Hill. They hit stride in late April, beating playoff-bound Francis Lewis by eight and then steamrolling Richmond Hill by 23.

"The girls realized at that point they could hit good pitching," Piorkowski said. "I've pushed them hard and they've been able to rise to the occasion."

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