

# Pitchers travel far & wide to train with Bayside coach Stephen Piorkowski

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Set up, wind up and deliver. Set up, wind up and deliver. It's the sequence that Van Buren freshman [Klarissa Ramirez](#) repeats over and over again on Saturday morning, throwing a four-seam fastball, two-seam fastball, change-up and drop in rapid succession.

Pitching the same sequence in an adjacent cage is [Priscilla Lallave](#), a freshman at [Francis Lewis](#).

This is what Ramirez and Lallave do for an hour each weekend: hone their skills in the Fastpitch Now program at Prospect Sports Complex in [Farmingdale](#), L.I.

"They're freshmen and they're probably both in the Top 10 in the city," said [Stephen Piorkowski](#), the softball coach at Bayside HS who founded Fastpitch Now five years ago and trains Lallave, Ramirez and others. "By their sophomore, junior and senior years, they're only going to get stronger."

Ramirez and her inexperienced Van Buren squad have identical records of 1-4, but a look at Ramirez' numbers illustrates her potential.

Ramirez has been hit hard through five games, and she sports a bloated 6.03 ERA. But she also has 39 strikeouts, including the 11 she tallied in a 12-2 win over Adams last Tuesday.

"Sometimes I feel pressure and if something goes wrong, I take it out on me," Ramirez said. "But I keep on working."

Added Piorkowski: "She's going to take her lumps, but she's only going to get stronger."

Lallave, on the other hand, hasn't gone to the mound for the Patriots this year. That's because she's playing behind senior pitching standout [Tina DeLuca](#) (4-1, 2.10 ERA).

"It's tense; it makes me nervous (waiting)," Lallave said.

"I want her on the mound so bad," added [Annel Sanchez](#), a Fastpitch Now trainer and former [Bayside](#) pitching standout who earned the Heisman-PSAL Wingate award in 2004. "I want her to be in pressure situations now, but she's game ready."

Lallave and Ramirez have been attending Piorkowski's sessions for the past few years; in the process, the two, who both live in [Queens Village](#), have developed a solid friendship. Their parents take turns driving the girls to and from Farmingdale.

Piorkowski describes his program, which costs \$70 for an hourly session, as a methodical, step-by-step process for building solid pitchers.

"When we first start with them it's just basic stance, grip, going through the motions," Piorkowski said.

Piorkowski first tries to teach each pitcher to establish a fastball.

"Two-thirds of your (fastballs) have to be strikes, and then we teach the changeup," he said. "You have the fastball, (the) changeup, and when two-thirds of those are strikes, we move on to the next pitch. That's how it works."

As pitchers refine their arsenal, Piorkowski schools them on the finer points of location, body control and forcing hitters off balance.

"What happens to most of my pitchers that I've had success with is, they start late," Piorkowski said, referring to players who've entered his program as upperclassmen. "(Lallave and Ramirez) are experienced pitchers in the ninth grade."

But isn't there a problem with training athletes who could wind up burying your own team? Van Buren and Francis Lewis play in the same [Queens](#) A-1 division as Piorkowski's Commodores.

"The way I see it, by training them and making them better, I'm making my team better," said Piorkowski, whose Commodores are 3-2.

Sanchez, who began pitching for Bayside as a senior, in 2004, and went on to play for [New York Institute of Technology](#), believes Lallave and Ramirez are ahead of the curve.

"They're going to have such an advantage because they're not going to have nerves like I did my senior year," Sanchez said. "I had to bottle (my nerves) up because I was the leader out there. They can just play."