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Bayside crushes Cardozo, avoids catastrophe

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Steve Piorkowski's favorite word this season has been "catastrophe." And, the coach says, his Bayside softball team needs to avoid those at all costs.

"It's when we're not doing as well as we're supposed to," senior windmill Keren Baruch said. "When we don't hit our level of potential."

One of those catastrophes was brewing in the fourth inning Monday. Bayside was up seven runs, but Cardozo was threatening with the bases loaded, just one out and the middle of the order up. Piorkowski pulled starting pitcher Kaitlyn Klein and inserted Baruch. She promptly struck out Jen Beiner and got Anna Labocetta to pop out to second base to wiggle out of the jam.

"That was the game," Piorkowski said.

Bayside would go on to score six runs in the bottom of the inning and cruised to a 16-3, run-rule victory in five innings at home against its PSAL Queens A-I rival. Baruch got out of some more trouble in the fifth without giving up a run or hit as the Commodores found their way to sole possession of first place in the division.

"I expect her to do that," senior centerfielder Cheska Mauban said. "That's what Bayside does."

Baruch was pitching in just her second league game after spending three weeks with her family in Israel. She came in for the last inning Friday against Adlai Stevenson after coming right from John F. Kennedy airport. With Klein and Baruch, it gives Bayside (5-1) a nice 1-2 punch with a year of experience under their belts.

"Last year, I let them pitch through the catastrophes and they've learned from it," Piorkowski said. ... "I have the luxury of putting another kid in there when things aren't going well."

The Commodores, who came in ranked No. 5 in the PSAL by The Post, started quickly. They scored seven runs in the first inning off Judges starter Alyssa Annicaro, who is filling in for her older sister Amanda (illness). Annicaro deserved better though. A line drive to right field by Bayside designated player Soribel Paulino with the bases loaded was misplayed by No. 7 Cardozo (4-2) and everyone came around to score.

A similar thing happened in the fourth when Victoria Yip ripped a slicing liner to right that ate up the Cardozo outfield. It ended up being a three-run home run for the junior third baseman. The sun was an issue on both plays and Piorkowski admitted as much. It doesn't hurt that he preaches opposite-field hitting.

"I tell my girls to go with the pitch," he said.

Still, Bayside rapped out 12 hits and every single player in the starting lineup got on base. Yip ended up with five RBIs, Julie Wagner was 1-for-2 with two RBIs and two runs scored and Mauban was 3-for-4 with two runs scored. Joey Chan went 2-for-3 with an RBI and three runs scored and Nichola Nichols, Na Eun Yoon and Paulino all scored two runs apiece.

"Our key this year is hitting," Piorkowski said.

Baruch did say it took something away that Amanda Annicaro wasn't throwing though. There's no timetable for her return and even after a procedure on glands in her neck doctors don't know what the cause of her illness is.

"We would have rather played against their regular player," Baruch said.

But all in all it was a strong performance by the Commodores, who have another big game coming up Friday against No. 8 Francis Lewis. Mauban said Bayside is especially looking forward to that game. It's another chance to impose its will on a division opponent.

As long as the Commodores avoid those catastrophes.

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