

PB Belles fall short in title bid

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The Pelham Bay Belles 14 & Under All-Stars at the Mid-Atlantic Championship game - (front, l-r) coach Hildy Guerra, Michelle Diller, Kristie Davidow, Krista Rinaldi, Danielle Kirrane, Christine Quinones, Joann Guerra, Victoria Quinones, Tiffany Rondon, Krista Lancione, (back, l-r) Jeff Ortiz, scorer; Roch Baamonde, manager; Victoria Baamonde, Francesca Lamaruggine, and coach Geri O'Flanagan. - Photo courtesy of the Pelham Bay Belles

After winning the Metro New York State 14-and-under Babe Ruth Softball Championship last month, the Pelham Bay Belles' win streak has unfortunately come to an end.

The Belles traveled to Ashley, Pennsylvania to compete in the double elimination Mid-Atlantic Championship Tournament two weekends ago, playing strong until they hit a roadblock in the form of Western New York, who ended the Pelham Bay team's dreams of championship glory, 15-0.

"We are very proud of these girls," said Jeff Ortiz, a scorer for the all-star team and a manager for the Rubies, one of the teams in the Pelham Bay softball league. "They all came together from different teams and had only been practicing together for two weeks when they took part in the tournaments."

After winning the Metro title, the Belles, one of eight teams vying for the Mid-Atlantic championship, found themselves outsized when competing against representatives from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Eastern New York, Western New York and two teams from Pennsylvania.

"Most of the girls are 13," said Ortiz. "They were young compared to their opponents, some of whom came into the league at 14 years of age, but turned 15 by the time the tournament had started. They were playing girls twice their size, but they did not let that stop them."

The tournament kicked off with a Home Run Derby contest that featured three Belles - Danielle Kirrane, Tiffany Rondon and Victoria Quinones, who had a strong showing, ending the exhibition in fourth place.

The following day, the Belles opened up against Maryland behind pitcher Kristie Davidow. With 2 outs in the 5th inning, the score knotted at 1, Maryland rallied for 6 runs and won the game 7-1. Despite the losing effort, their opponents named Danielle Kirrane the MVP for the Belles, who moved into the losers' bracket, one game away from being eliminated.

That night, the Pelham Bay girls faced Delaware. Manager Roch Baamonde handed the ball to pitcher Francesca Lamaruggine who had won 3 games in the Metro Championship.

Francesca responded with a 1 hitter in a 21-1 rout behind hitting stars Lamaruggine, who had 3 hits and 4 RBI's; Krista Rinaldi, Vicky Quinones, Tiffany Rondon and Michelle Diller.

The Belles also showcased excellent defense led by SS Krista Lancionne and 2B Joanne Guerra and 1B Victoria Baamonde/Christine Quinones. Pitching and hitting star Francesca Lamaruggine was named the Belles' MVP by Delaware, as they moved into the following round.

The following day, against the team from Western New York, Baamonde stuck with Francesca, who gave her all in the extreme heat against an overpowering opponent, having to leave the game after 4 innings, trailing 6-0, before being eliminated 17-0.

"They just out gunned us," said Ortiz, who noted that despite the loss, catcher Victoria Quinones was named MVP for the Belles. Ortiz pointed to others who deserved mention.

"Coaches Hildy Guerra and Gerri O'Flanagan, along with manager Roch Baamonde, must be commended for their excellent job of putting together this team. Everyone should be proud of their accomplishments," he said. "The Belles look forward to defending their Metro New York title next year."