

PB Belles win Metro NYS 14-U

Overcome strong teams, hurdles to capture Babe Ruth Softball Title

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The Pelham Bay Belles overcame some strong odds and immediate hurdles to claim the Metro New York State 14-and-under Babe Ruth Softball Championship two weeks ago.

The Belles have now moved on to the Mid-Atlantic Regional competition, but the road to Pennsylvania was not a smooth ride.

Competing in the double elimination tournament for the NYS title, in Glen Cove, Long Island, the Pelham Bay team found themselves immediately on the brink of elimination, losing a heartbreaker, 8-6, to Levittown, despite the fine pitching of Kristie Davidow and a homerun by shortstop Krista Lancione.

An additional 2 RBI's by Michelle Diller were not enough, as the Belles moved into a losers' bracket battle with Plainedge.

With no room for error, it didn't come easy for the Bronx softball team. Losing in the early goings of the game, the Belles came from behind to invoke a 10-run mercy rule, winning 15-5 on the backs of pitcher Francesca Lamaruggine, who gave up only 5 hits and 3 earned runs; and Kristie Davidow, who followed up a great pitching effort with even better hitting, going 4-4 and scoring 3 runs in the win.

A great win, the Pelham Bay Belles were now faced with the monumental task of having to return to Glen Cove and beat Kingsbridge before having to sweep Levittown in two straight games for the championship.

Manager Roch Baamonde, who put together the Belles with the help of coaches Hildy Guerra and Gerri O'Flanagan, decided to give the ball to Lamaruggine, hoping her great pitching performance against Plainedge would continue. But their offense was the real story.

The Belles broke open a tight game and rallied to mercy Kingsbridge 21-11 behind the efforts of centerfielder Krista Rinaldi, who had 2 hits and 3 runs; Davidow, who had 4 more hits and 3 runs and first baseman Karina Maldonado and Lamaruggine, who scored 3 runs each. Second baseman Victoria Baamonde and rightfielder Joann Guero added 3 hits apiece while third baseman Tiffany Rondon and catcher Danielle Kirrane picked up two hits apiece in the win.

In the opening game of a potential two-game series against the undefeated Levittown, the elder Baamonde went with his ace Davidow, and the Belles immediately jumped out with run support, taking a 4-0 lead after the 1st inning of play.

The Belles took a 6-2 lead, the exact score the team was up by in the first round battle between the two teams. History almost repeated itself, as Levittown rallied to take an 8-6 lead into the bottom of the 4th inning. But the Belles were not going to give up without a fight. Davidow settled down, pitching three scoreless innings, while Rinaldi, Davidow, Lancione and 4 RBI's from Rondon picked up the offense. Pelham Bay won 10-6.

In a back-and-forth battle, Davidow picked up 3 hits and 4 runs, V. Baamonde and Lancione picked up 3 hits apiece and Kirrane added 3 runs off of 2 hits, as Davidow shut Levittown down with a blazing strikeout to end a 15-11 victory in the 7th inning.

"This is a special team that battled back time and time against all odds to win its well deserved championship," said the proud manager, as he discussed stats.

“As a team they battled .441 with an on-base percentage of .564,” he added, before turning to his players. “Kristie was unstoppable. She reached base safely in 18 of her 22 total at-bats and batted .750. And of course, she and Francesca were awesome on the mound. But nobody is as tough as Danielle. Catching five games in two days. She’s my hero.