

ND girls off, running in early-season play

INSTANT REPLAY



By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

The high school softball season is only a few weeks old, but Aquinas Institute and Elmira Notre Dame are rolling along a little better than expected this season. Meanwhile, Nazareth Academy is still looking to improve.

Our Lady of Mercy, Bishop Kearney and Geneva DeSales did not compete due to spring vacation last week, but all three diocesan teams were scheduled to resume play on April 29.

In Section 4, Elmira Notre Dame (2-2 in the Sullivan Trail Conference, 6-2 overall) won two of its three games last week thanks to the strong play of several standouts.

Bobbie Jo McMail had a stellar week on the mound. The senior hurler pitched a one-hitter as Notre Dame shut out host

Corning East, 2-0, in a STC game on April 26.

McMail recorded 13 strike outs and walked none during the win.

The Crusaders got all the offense they needed in the third inning after Heather Hanrahan walked and moved to second base on Lisa Punzo's bunt single. Erin Kernan's sacrifice fly to right field drove in what proved to be the winning run as Hanrahan scored all the way from second base.

The Crusaders added a run in the fourth inning when Colleen Agan's run-scoring single drove in Kristen Kohan.

Earlier in the week, Notre Dame fell to visiting Corning West, 5-4, in eight innings on April 25. The STC game had originally been scheduled for April 24, but it was postponed due to bad weather.

According to ND Coach Dave Potter, base-running blunders hurt his squad against CW. He said his team squandered several opportunities due to miscues on the base paths.

Notre Dame actually out hit Corning West, which collected five runs on seven hits. The Crusaders could only muster four runs despite pounding out 10 hits.

McMail appeared strong on the mound, however, as she struck out 10 batters and only walked one.

ND scored an unearned run in the third inning when McMail drove in Punzo, who reached first base on an error and moved into scoring position on Hanrahan's single.

Potter said his Crusaders had a chance to do some damage in the sixth inning but had to settle for just one run. McMail wrapped a base hit before Kernan reached on an error. Mary Valeant then drove in McMail with a single.

McMail finished 2-for-3 in the game with one run batted in. Valeant was 1-for-3 with one RBI, and Hanrahan and Kernan each finished 2-for-4.

ND's STC game scheduled for April 22 at Elmira Free Academy was postponed due to the weather. The Crusaders made up the league battle on April 23 by rallying for a 5-1 win.

Potter said he was pleased with McMail's pitching in the romp. The Crusader hurler struck out seven and walked none.

The ND defense allowed only one run on two base hits in the first inning before



Nazareth Academy's Jennifer Olley loses the ball as she attempts to tag Aquinas' Sarah Bierley at third base during AQ's 7-4 win over the Lasers.

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

McMail drove in the tying run on a single by Punzo.

Notre Dame poured on the offense in the fourth inning as Hanrahan and McMail each singled before Kohan drove in the winning run. Valeant later walked before Kernan singled to drive in two more runs.

McMail, Kohan and Kernan each collected one RBI.

Although the Aquinas Institute (1-1 in the Private-Parochial League, 1-5 overall) lost two of its three games last week, Little Irish Coach Dave Herbst said his team showed promise by advancing to the championship game of the Olympia Tournament last weekend.

The Little Irish succumbed in the title game to Greece Arcadia, 10-2, on April 27.

According to Herbst, Arcadia's Carrie Plouffe was the difference as the right-hander struck out 15 AQ batters.

Sarah Bierley struck out 12 in a losing effort for AQ.

Offensively, Lynn Wesley scored on a single in the second inning and Sandy Petty plated a run on a triple in the third for the Little Irish.

In their opening game of the tourney on April 26, the Little Irish edged Nazareth Academy, 7-4.

Bierley went the entire way on the mound, giving up only four runs while striking out eight and walking just two.

"There is the difference right there," said Herbst, noting that Bierley's ability to keep the walks down was a key to the win.

In the first inning, Nina Cimino walked and scampered all the way home after a base hit by Wesley.

Nancy Piotrowski got the Little Irish go-

ing in the second inning as she walked, stole second and scored on Sheila Maloney's single.

In the fourth, Wesley singled and later scored on a single by Petty, who came home on Patti Held's single.

With two outs in the inning, Bierley walked, stole second and third and scored on an error.

Bierley added another run in the sixth when she reached first on an error and scored on Wesley's single.

AQ's scoring ended after a triple by Petty and a run-scoring single by Stephanie Renica.

Herbst credited the battery of Bierley and catcher Katie Wright for securing the win over the Lasers.

Earlier in the week, the Little Irish took a 15-5 beating in a non-league game against host Eastridge on April 23.

Herbst said his team gave up too many walks in the game. In fact, all of Eastridge's runs in the first two innings came after bases on balls, he said.

"We can't defense the walks," said Herbst.

Claire Stortini, Wesley and Bierley all saw time on the mound. Bierley had a strong performance, according to Herbst, but by then the game was well out of reach.

Aquinas scored four of its five runs in the second inning. Sandy Petty scored on a double before Renica and Wendy Boprey cracked base hits. Marcia Kress and Cimino later forced in runs.

Boprey scored AQ's final run when she walked and later scored on Maloney's single in the fourth inning.

Nazareth Academy Coach Dave Pisano

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Aquinas infielder Sheila Maloney reacts after misplaying the ball.

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