

Little Irish fall in first-ever trip to softball final

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — In more ways than one, it was not a good night for a softball game.

Number one, it happened to be the night of Aquinas Institute's senior ball. Number two, the wet weather was more conducive for playing rugby than girls' softball.

But players don't get a chance to play in the Section 5 championship game too often, and this was a first for the Little Irish. So, adorned with extra makeup, formal hairdos and accompanied by their tuxedo-clad dates waiting in the stands, most of the AQ seniors took time out from their big party to brave the elements and face Eastridge in the Class BB championship contest.

Unfortunately, their efforts were in vain as top-seeded Eastridge scored a 15-1 victory over the third-seeded Little Irish at McAvoy Park. The game was called after 4 1/2 innings when a game-long drizzle erupted into a downpour.

AQ finished its 1992 season with a 14-8 record. The Eastridge loss was preceded by a 10-0 win over 10th-seeded Pittsford Sutherland in a June 3 semifinal contest at McAvoy. This was the first year AQ had ever advanced as far as the sectional semifinals.

Two other Catholic high school softball teams in the diocese, Bishop Kearney and Elmira Notre Dame, were eliminated last week in quarterfinal



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

AQ second baseman Patti Held (center) celebrates after tagging out Pittsford Sutherland's Karen Spall during the Little Irish's 10-0 win over the Knights in the Class BB semifinal game June 3 at McAvoy Park.

play. Kearney (16-6), the No. 2 seed in Class BB, was upset by Sutherland, 10-8, on June 2 at McAvoy.

ND (11-8), the No. 7 seed in Section 4 Class C, lost 10-4 to host and No. 2-seeded Sidney on June 2. The Crusaders had advanced with an 8-1 home win over No. 10 Thomas Edison one day earlier.

Aquinas, in its title game against Eastridge, got started off on the wrong foot when starting pitcher Sarah Bier-

ley elected to miss the game and remain at the senior ball. Bierley had thrown a three-hit shutout in the semifinal victory over Sutherland.

Eastridge took advantage of the pitching void by scoring four runs in the first inning and two in the second. The Lancers proceeded to hammer out nine fourth-inning runs before the game was called after AQ Coach Dave Herbst, Eastridge Coach Jack Foote, the umpires, and tournament officials

conferred at home plate.

"The umpires said, 'We're not coming back to finish the game.' It was an official game because it had gone at least four innings, and the only choice we might have had to continue would have been to play the next morning," said Herbst.

Herbst defended Bierley's decision to skip the championship game. "I told the seniors (the day before the game) that they've given me three months of 110 percent effort daily, sometimes coming to practice at 6 a.m. I wouldn't blame them a bit if they took the night off. Kids nowadays spend fortunes on these balls — I was almost encouraging the seniors to go."

In the victory over Sutherland, Bierley's strong pitching was backed by her club's offensive support, which included a six-run fourth inning.

Kearney, which faced Sutherland in a quarterfinal game that had been postponed for two days due to rain, appeared in control most of the way. But the Knights rallied for seven sixth-inning runs to take a 10-7 lead, and hung on from there.

Notre Dame's win over Edison was also a makeup game from two days earlier. The Crusaders were led by Bobbie Jo McMail's one-hitter; McMail also slammed two home runs and finished with four runs batted in.

Playing on back-to-back days and traveling 90 miles to face Sidney appeared to take its toll on the Crusaders, who never recovered after allowing five second-inning runs in their quarterfinal game.



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