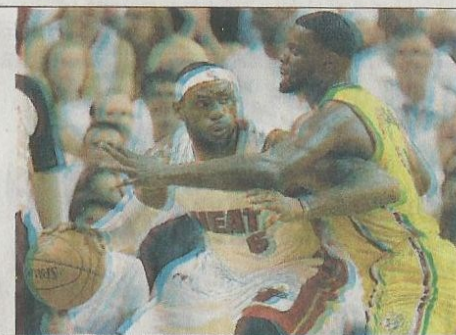


Sports

Saturday, May 31, 2014

■ **LeBron James** scores 25 points as the Heat rout the Pacers in Game 6 to clinch their fourth straight trip to the NBA Finals. **3C**



Seraphs rally to walk-off victory



CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR

St. Bonaventure players swarm Cece Flinn after she scored the winning run in the 8th inning Friday against Cantwell-Sacred Heart of Mary.

■ **St. Bonaventure wins program's first CIF-SS title**

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IRVINE — The odds seemed stacked against the St. Bonaventure High softball team.

Facing a two-run deficit, the Seraphs were down to their final at-bats in the bottom of the eighth inning.

Their ace had just given up two runs after only allowing one hit through the first seven innings.

They had scored only one run

ST. BONAVENTURE	CANTWELL- SACRED HEART
4	3
HIGH SCHOOL SOFTBALL	
CIF-SS DIV. 6 CHAMPIONSHIP	

and had yet to come from behind to win a game the entire season.

But instead of losing confidence, St. Bonaventure found resiliency.

The third-seeded Seraphs rallied for three runs in the bottom of the eighth to walk off with a 4-3 victory over fourth-seeded Cantwell-Sacred Heart in the CIF-Southern Section Division 6 championship game Friday afternoon at Deanna Manning Stadium.

Natasha Inglis hit a ball into right field to score CeCe Flinn

with the game-winning run as St. Bonaventure (24-4) captured the first CIF-SS title in program history.

Once Flinn touched home plate, the Seraphs streamed from the dugout onto the field in celebration of their wild comeback.

"From the beginning of the season, we were dreaming of this happening. It feels absolutely amazing," Flinn said. "Crossing home plate and winning the game, I looked around and was so glad I had these people on my team to share it with."

St. Bonaventure junior pitcher Cielo Meza finished with 15 strikeouts while allowing four hits over eight innings.

See **SERAPHS, 4C**

SERAPHS from 1C

Through the first seven innings, Meza was nearly untouchable. She carried a no-hitter into the fifth inning before a bloop bunt single just eluded the glove of a diving Lindsey Dietz along the third baseline.

Cantwell-Sacred Heart (21-8) scored in the fifth after Anais Sustayta was hit by a pitch with two outs, stole second and came home on a throwing error as she attempted to steal third.

But St. Bonaventure rallied to tie the game 1-1 in the bottom of the fifth when Dietz drove an RBI double to the fence in left-center field.

Meza struck out all three batters in the seventh inning and carried a one-hitter into eighth before Cantwell-Sacred Heart finally started to make solid contact against the right-hander.

Sabrina Gomez and Serena Meehan belted back-to-back doubles to center field to give Cantwell-Sacred Heart a 2-1 lead.

After a sacrifice fly advanced Meehan to third base, she scored on a passed ball for a 3-1 lead.

"They are a good-hitting team and by the third or fourth time through the

lineup, you are going to catch up to any pitcher," St. Bonaventure head coach Bill Therrien said. "It doesn't matter how dominating they are, if you see a pitcher three or four times good hitters will come around."

Once St. Bonaventure entered the dugout only three outs away from a potential loss, junior Shay Feith gave a rousing speech to inspire the team, while Meza relayed her faith to individual players.

"Some of my teammates were crying in there, and I knew I had to pick them up with my words and my encouragement," said Meza, who has verbally committed to Long Beach State. "I made sure they felt like they were believed in and that I wanted them to have this championship and share it with me."

Celeste Ekman led off the bottom of the eighth with a single up the middle for St. Bonaventure. After Hannah Emery grounded out, Meza walked to put runners on second and third with one out.

Flinn hit a single to left-field that plated both runners to the tie game 3-3 after an error on the throw home.

"I couldn't get Shay's speech out of my head at the plate," Flinn said. "I was just thinking, 'Don't ruin this



CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR

Taylor Prater of St. Bonaventure scores the tying run in the bottom of the eighth inning as Amanda Garcia of Cantwell-Sacred Heart is late with the tag. St. Bonaventure scored another run in the inning to win the CIF-SS Division 6 championship game Friday.

for my team.' I wasn't even thinking about myself. I was just hoping I could bring in the runs for my team."

Flinn managed to advance to third base on the throwing error, setting the stage for Inglis to drive her

home with the walk-off hit into right-field.

"Natasha had been struggling a little bit at the plate,

and we just told her to go to the right side," Therrien said. "That is all we wanted her to do in that spot, and she did it. For her to get that hit was unbelievable."

It seemed fitting that Meza, Flinn and Inglis were involved in the stirring comeback.

Meza transferred to St. Bonaventure from Agoura High this season, and took over the ace role once occupied by Flinn without any hard feelings between the two.

Meza and Flinn started this season's playoff run by combining for a perfect game in the first round with Inglis as their catcher.

They finished it with Meza carrying the Seraphs through seven innings and Flinn providing offensive support to ensure Meza's effort would be rewarded.

Emotionally spent after the historic victory, Meza choked back tears as she watched her teammates gather their belongings for the long bus ride home.

"Coming to St. Bonaventure, this was one of my goals," Meza said. "This game really meant a lot to the people on my team, so I knew I had to do my job so they could do theirs. We did it as a family."