

Mustangs use power surge to avenge early season loss in wildcard round:

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Two months ago to the day Hemet West Valley's softball team fell in Indio to Shadow Hills by a score of 11-7. On Tuesday afternoon, with a spot against #6 La Canada in the first round at stake, Mustang batters put up 10 runs on 14 hits and prevailed 10-6 in a CIF-SS Division 5 wildcard matchup.

Mustang starting pitcher Serena Herbranson was perfect thru three innings in the circle with one strikeout, three ground ball outs, three flyouts/line drives, and two outs on bunt attempts.

Against Shadow Hills starter Nicole Rodriguez (L, 1 IP, 6 Hits, 5 Runs) the Hemet West Valley offense struck for five runs in their half of the first which would prove to be more than enough for a win. Alexis Crawford led off the game and reached with a single. However an error by the center fielder allowed her to score on the play. Krystina Lorch then doubled and advanced to third on a wild pitch. Herbranson lined out to shortstop and Ashley Crumley drew a walk creating a two on one out situation. Jaedyn Forshaw hit an RBI double to left field which scored Lorch and Crumley. Infield singles by Briana Zavala & Evelyn Lorch set the stage for Adriana Rodriguez who cleared the bases with a two RBI triple. Samantha Ramirez walked and Crawford lined out to the pitcher ending the inning.

West Valley's lead would grow to 7-0 after two more runs in their half of the third. Evelyn Lorch led off with a single. With two outs Crawford walked setting up Krystina Lorch with runners on first and second. She came thru with an RBI single but thanks to some aggressive base running advanced to third and Herbranson grounded out to end the inning.

Shadow Hills struck for two runs in their half of the 4th to begin a long climb back into the game. Alexia Terrazas & Kara Diaz led the way with consecutive walks. With two outs Jaelah Burrell hit a two run RBI double to CF. Alexa Hernandez flew out to end the inning.

Flash forward to the bottom of the fifth where Mustang batters added three more runs to their lead and made it 10-2 after five innings. With two outs Crawford hit a single and stole second base giving Krystina Lorch another opportunity with runners in scoring position. She hit a RBI single and advanced to second on the relay home. Herbranson then helped herself in a big way hitting a two run homer to straight away center field. Crumley grounded out to end the inning.

The Knights got one more back in their sixth inning. Terrazas led off the inning with a triple to left field and scored on an RBI single from Annyka DeLara. Burrell drew a walk which put runners on first and second but the rally fizzled out with consecutive ground outs to end the inning.

Shadow Hills got three more in the top of the seventh but could not come all the way back from a seven run deficit. With two outs Terrazas reached on an infield single and Kara Diaz got aboard on a misplayed pop fly in shallow left field. Amy Ibarra drove a three run homer to left center field before DeLara struck out to end the game.

Mustang head coach Monty Crawford spoke afterwards. I asked him what his team learned from that previous encounter and he remarked "It woke us up a little bit. We didn't play as well as we could've the first time. We showed today that we could compete. Our offense did the job they needed to. I'm proud of my team and our biggest key was pitch selection, making adjustments there and that's what they did." He lamented about some opportunities lost however saying "We got a little bit content with a big lead and missed a couple more scoring chances. We'll have to be nearly perfect to move on."

When asked to assess Herbranson's day in the circle Crawford said "Her biggest issue was the walks she gave up. If she can cut those down we'll be ok. That's something she'll need to work on for Thursday but overall she did a pretty good job."

Serena Herbranson also stopped by. I asked her if she realized she was perfect after three and remarked "As the batters kept coming I zone out until the ball is put in play or someone mentions it." When asked what she learned from that first encounter Herbranson said "I had a good feeling of who could hit what and was more prepared this time to attack this lineup." About the road trip ahead and keys to successfully traveling she remarked "I'd say we have to be engaged and hyped with each other the entire trip. Minimize the naps and come ready to play."

Leading Performers: Hemet West Valley

Herbranson-- 2 for 4 with a HR and 2 RBI

In the Circle: W, Complete Game, 7 K's, 3 BB's, 5 Hits, 6 Runs

Alexis Crawford-- 2 for 3 with a BB & SB

Krystina Lorch-- 3 for 3 with 3 RBI

Jayden Forshaw-- 2 for 3

Adriana Rodriguez-- 2 for 4 with 2 RBI

Leading Performers: Shadow Hills

Alexia Terrazas-- 2 for 3 with a BB

