

#1 Falcons need extra innings but find a way to advance in Division 4 playoffs:

R: H: E:

Arlington (18-5): 0-0-0-2-0-0-1=3 9 1

Aquinas (23-0): 3-0-0-0-0-0-1=4 10 0

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When a team in any sport goes undefeated in regular season play with very little resistance sometimes they need one reminder of how small the difference between wins and losses really is. Thursday afternoon the Aquinas softball team got such a reminder in their game against Arlington, the Sunbelt League runner up and a team that has been ranked this year.

After jumping on Lions starter Brittnee Wimbish for three runs on five hits in the first inning Aquinas had just three in their next five innings and didn't score. The Lions used a two run homer in the fourth inning by Kelleigh Fielder to pull within 3-2 and tied it up in their final at bat with a RBI walk. However in the Falcons seventh Arianna Hernandez came up to bat with two outs & Bobbiann Pratt on base against Marilyn Garcia. She came thru with an opposite field single to end the game and send Aquinas onto Tuesday's second round where they'll host Rialto.

When I spoke with Hernandez afterwards she remarked "It was tense in the dugout after that tying walk but we knew if we did what we had been doing we'd have a shot at scoring again. I knew she was going to give me something outside and that I had to go opposite field if I was getting a hit there. There's definitely pressure there as a number one seed but we just focus on what's going on here and not outside distractions."

Elleana Navarro & Maya Gonzales had back to back singles leading off the Falcon first inning against Wimbish. Bobbiann Pratt then had an RBI double to left field scoring Navarro. With one out Hernandez had a 2 RBI single to put the Falcons up 3-0. Skylar Griffiths had a two out single but the additional runners were stranded when Jaci Hernandez struck out.

With one out in the third Aquinas had two on and one out after a single from Dannika Merlos & double by Griffiths. Jaci Hernandez grounded out to Sophia Matsut at shortstop and then Merlos was doubled off trying to score on the play.

Arlington fed off the momentum of that inning ending double play in their fourth inning striking for two runs against Falcons starter Reina Castillo. At that point the sophomore had given up two hits and struck out two. Lions catcher Hannah Lerma led off the inning with a double to deep center field which was not more than an inch or two from being a solo home run. Two

batters later it was Kelleigh Fielder who brought Arlington within a run by hitting her sixth home run of the year to left field.

Merlos led off the Aquinas sixth inning with a single but was again picked off as Griffiths lined out and was caught with too big a lead. After a walk to Jaci Hernandez the Lions coach Greg Brandt pulled Wimbish for Marilyn Garcia who walked her first batter before striking out Navarro.

Singles from Garcia and Marina Montalvo gave Lerma another opportunity in the Lions seventh but with a base open Aquinas coach Chris Ybarra issued an intentional walk to Arlington's catcher. That strategy only works if you get the next batter but Castillo gave up a game tying walk to Adrianna Montalvo before getting said out.

Ybarra remarked "That's the first time I've ever played it that way and shows how much regard I have for her as a player."

With one out in the Falcons seventh Pratt had a line drive single to center field. After Castillo grounded out with a chance to help herself at the plate Hernandez drove an offering from Garcia to right field scoring Pratt and ending things in walkoff fashion.

He went on and said "In that first inning we did a great job of sticking to our game plan but then got really undisciplined for most of that game. We've had a habit of taking our foot off the gas this year at times and luckily it didn't come back to haunt us today. Arlington's a well coached and quality softball team who made us earn everything today. This is a very young group (one senior) and I feel like we grew up playing in this kind of atmosphere against that team."

Arlington Notables:

LP: Marilyn Garcia 1 IP, 2 Hits, 1 Run, 1 K
Desiree Lara>>2-3
Hannah Lerma>>2-3 with a walk
Home Run: Kelleigh Fielder (6th)

Falcons Notable:

WP: Reina Castillo CG, 9 Hits, 3 Runs, 3 K's, 2 BB (1 Intentional)
Arianna Hernandez>>2-4 with 3 RBI including the walkoff single to end it
Bobbiann Pratt>>2-3 with an RBI

