

SPORTS

Bradshaw wins first section baseball title

By John Hull - Citizen Sports Writer

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It's been quite a school year for the entire athletic department at Bradshaw Christian High School. The fewer than 300 students that attend the small school produced a historic athletic season.

Try four Sac-Joaquin Section Division VII championships all in one year. In the fall it was football. Girls' volleyball lost in the championship game. In the winter, girls' basketball made it three section titles in a row and ended up the NorCal runner-up.

The boys' basketball team lost in the section semifinals.

In late May, the girls' soccer team won the section banner for a second consecutive season, and then last Monday the baseball team grabbed the fourth section trophy of the 2009-10 school year by defeating Valley Christian of Roseville, 4-2, in the Division VII championship game at Sacramento City College.

"It was a nail biter," said Bradshaw coach Drew Rickert after the game. "We felt like we had to get on them early and change the momentum of the game."

That was the school's first-ever title in baseball and its ninth section championship since the Pride began playing varsity sports five years ago.

Valley Christian had won the previous two Division VII titles.

It started with a gutty complete –game performance by pitcher Brady Dragmire. The junior right-hander struck out 11 batters and fought out of two bases-loaded situations, once in the fifth inning and again in the sixth.

"I just knew I had to go after them and throw strikes today (last Monday)," Dragmire said. "It was definitely a team effort today."

Bradshaw struck early in the top of the first inning. Tyler Takahashi got on base via an error and E.J. Edinburgh was hit-by-a-pitch from Valley Christian pitcher Ryan Cordell.

With one out, Takahashi scored on a wild pitch to open the scoring.

Alex Popovich then scored when a Logan Shaurer fly ball was hit to short right-field. Valley Christian second baseman Micky Defiebre had the ball momentarily in the glove, but tripped over his center fielder's legs and dropped the ball.

The next batter, freshman Austin Ragsdale, drilled a triple over the left-fielder's head to drive in Schaurer for a 3-0 lead.

"I saw it and thought, 'I'm hitting that', so I swung and didn't even feel it," Ragsdale said of his hit.

"That made quite a difference for us," Rickert said of the early lead. "We knew that if we didn't get on them early, they'd probably roll us."

The game moved along at a brisk pace over the next four innings.

In the fifth, Dragmire gave up three singles in a row to load the bases. But, after a mound visit by Rickert, he fanned Junior Casas and Donovan Allen to end the inning.

"I told him to not try to be too perfect, to challenge them and then trust yourself," Rickert said of his mid-inning discussion with Dragmire.

The Pride tacked on an insurance run in the sixth when Dragmire led off with a double down the left-field line. He scored on Nick Arthur's two-out bloop infield single to extend the lead to 4-1.

The Lions added one more run in the bottom of the sixth on Paul Finnel's RBI sacrifice fly. In the bottom of the seventh, they got a one-out double from Casas and had the tying run come to the plate.

But Dragmire struck out Allen and got Kenneth Whitehurst to ground out to end the game.

The title also gave Rickert the unique and rare honor of coaching both a football and baseball section championship team in the same school year.

"I just coach and just enjoy the kids," Rickert said of his feat. "We have a great group of kids at Bradshaw that just want to go out and work. This is one place I've been where the kids don't mind putting in the time and effort.

"I'm sure happy."

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