

Holy Redeemer softball clinches WVC Division 3 title

Royals post 11th shutout with win vs. Northwest

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Holy Redeemer's Kristen Coffay slides into third base in the third inning before Northwest's Brenna Babcock can apply the tag.
Sean McKeag | Times Leader



Holy Redeemer second baseman Samantha Rajza catches a pop during the fourth inning.
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Northwest catcher Courtney Cragle looks at the umpire for the call after Holy Redeemer's Kristen Coffay slides safely into home plate during the fifth inning Thursday. She was called safe on the play.
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Just when it seems like an opponent — and there hasn't been many this season — looks like its going to give Holy Redeemer a tough time, it happens.

Bang. Big inning. Game all but over.

The fifth was when Redeemer struck Thursday, using a grand slam by Allyson Laiuvara on the way to a 10-0 victory in six innings over Northwest in a Wyoming Valley Conference Division 3 softball game.

Redeemer (11-0) clinched its fifth consecutive WVC Division 3 title with the win. The Royals are 59-0 in divisional play since 2013, but are taking their dominance a step further this season. They have outscored their divisional opponents 130-0. They finish off the regular season with

consecutive games against winless GAR on Friday and Monday and then play Meyers on Wednesday.

“It’s a good winning streak so we’re going to keep it going as long as we could,” said Redeemer third baseman Brittany Hebda, who reached base four times. “We’re not going to slack off on anybody.”

Laiuvara wasn’t slacking off at the plate, but did admit she was in a slump. She broke out of it in a big way.

After Laiuvara flying out to deep center in the second, with Northwest center fielder Brooke Harvey making the catch at the fence, she singled and later scored in the fourth and her grand slam to center pushed the lead to 9-0.

“I’m more worried about (hitting) line drives especially since I was in a slump for a little while,” Laiuvara said. “It felt nice, especially for my team.”

Redeemer hit the 10-run rule mark in a painful way in the sixth. Kristen Coffay walked and Morgan Bienkowski doubled to put runners on second and third. The next two batters — Hebda and Abby Shorts — were hit by pitches to end the game.

Redeemer led just 3-0 entering the fourth, with Tiana Wren’s homer, Shorts’ ground out and Hebda’s single accounting for the runs. A big inning, though, kept lurking as usual and it came in the fifth.

“They’re better at it,” Redeemer coach Jerry Paulukonis said. “I don’t know what it is. It could be they’re seeing the ball better that inning, have seen the pitcher a couple times, knowing what you have to do, seeing how they defense things. Whatever it is, they do what they have to do.”

Northwest (7-5) played the closest divisional game against Redeemer — a 7-0 loss on April 18. Coach Kevin Harvey thought his team hit well in that setback. Thursday was different. Reagan Harrison had the only hit, a clean ground single to left in the first inning. After that, the Rangers had their next 16 batters retired in order with 11 — including the last six — striking out.

Northwest is done with Redeemer for the year. The Rangers will be in the District 2 Class 2A playoffs, while Redeemer bumped up to 3A under the PIAA’s new six classification system. The Royals won the last two PIAA 2A state championships.

“For us it’s easy,” Northwest coach Kevin Harvey said. “District playoffs are coming and we won’t have to deal with Holy Redeemer. Hopefully, we don’t run into anybody else with that kind of pitching staff. I think we will match up fairly with what we have to face in districts. We should be a tough out.”