

Indians eliminated from postseason play

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Correspondent

WAYNE - The Derrick Bligh era at Wayne Valley ended with a disappointing Passaic County Tournament semifinal loss to Hawthorne (No 9), 5-3. Despite the career ending defeat, Bligh will best be remembered for leading the Valley Road school to great heights, largely on the strength of his right arm.

Last fall, he quarterbacked the Indians to an 11-1 record and a State Sectional runner up finish. It was Valley's best showing on the gridiron since 1992.

As a junior, he pitched the Valley baseball team to an 18-8 mark and a Passaic County semifinal appearance. As a senior, the team's record (12-12) slipped in wake of massive losses to graduation. Bligh still persevered with a 7-2 record. He once again helped Valley (No. 4) advance to the county semifinals and he earned the first round win over Lakeland and the second round win over Pompton Lakes.

Coach Jeff Hoover said that Bligh pitched well enough to win his final outing.

"We needed to hit the ball more," the coach said. "We put so much pressure on Derrick. We didn't give him a lot of room for error."

That did not matter during the course of the year as Bligh rarely required much of a cushion. But against Hawthorne, he needed more support. The Bears came back from a 3-2 deficit to claim victory. Valley got that lead in the fifth on a leadoff home run to right-center by second baseman Marcus Virgilito.

"It felt pretty good at 3-2 going into the sixth," Hoover admitted.

Hawthorne answered in the top of the sixth, putting runners on first and second on a single by Jim Zenock and a walk to Matt Goitz. John Savoie then doubled off the center field fence to score Zenock and tie the game at 3-3.

With runners on second and third and nobody out, Hawthorne seemed poised to take the lead, but Bligh fanned three straight batters - his eighth, ninth and 10th strikeouts of the



SENIOR LEADERSHIP - Wayne Valley senior Derrick Bligh played and pitched in his final high school game in a loss to Hawthorne in the semi final round of the Passaic County Baseball Tournament.