

Cuba clips Team USA, 1-0, in series finale

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**PINAR DEL RIO, Cuba** - The USA Baseball Collegiate National Team managed just four hits and left seven runners on base as Cuba made a sixth-inning RBI single hold up to claim a 1-0 victory and sweep the five-game series on Sunday at Capitán San Luis Stadium.

Team USA finishes the summer with an 18-8-2 record, including a 7-1 mark at Honkbal Week in the Netherlands where it won the tournament title.

"I am really proud of this team and all that we accomplished this summer," Team USA manager Dave Van Horn (Arkansas) said. "Starting with our tour of the Coastal Plain League when we were in something like 10 different hotels in 12 nights, these players have always had great attitudes, have never complained and really bonded as a squad.

"We started out really strong, winning a five-game series against Chinese Taipei and a hard-fought three game-series over Japan. Then, we took the first overseas trip for pretty much every player on the team and I felt like they responded really well. They showed up to play every day and played hard. We didn't panic after losing the first game at Honkbal Week and ran off seven straight wins to accomplish one of our biggest goals of the summer which was to win that tournament.

"We didn't finish quite like we had hoped down here in Cuba, but our players really kept a great attitude. We just couldn't get over the hump. It was hot and the travel was definitely a grind but the bottom line was that we played a great team, full of grown men. We lost three one-run games and just didn't field and hit like we were capable of."

On Sunday, Louisville right-hander Kyle Funkhouser rolled through the Cuba lineup twice, facing just two over the minimum in his 5.2 innings on the mound. He had their hitters tied in knots, striking out eight while allowing just two hits before leaving the game with two on and two outs.

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Cuba would get a big two-out, run-scoring single from Yadiel Hernandez, however, to plate the game's only run and put a tally in the earned run column on Funkhouser's sparkling worksheet.

On the other side of the diamond, Cuba starting pitcher Yasiel Sierra was equally as dominant, pitching 5.2 innings of his own. He held the U.S. off the scoreboard while yielding just four hits and striking out seven before a blister forced him to exit the game.

The U.S. didn't have much more luck against reliever Vladimir Gutierrez as he held the Red, White and Blue hitless over the final 3.1 frames to record his second save and Cuba's fourth in the five-game series.

Zack Collins (Miami) paced the U.S. offensively, reaching base in three of his four plate appearances with a couple of walks and a single. Mark Mathias (Cal Poly) added a pair of singles in the contest, while Tate Matheny (Missouri State) had a base hit and Christin Stewart (Tennessee) roped a double off the left-field wall in the third inning for the game's only extra-base hit.

In relief of Funkhouser, A.J. Minter (Texas A&M) fired 1.1 scoreless frames before handing the ball over to Dillon Tate (UCSB) who pitched a scoreless eighth.

"This summer has been an experience none of us will ever forget," Van Horn said. "When things slow down a little bit, I think all of us will reflect on this experience and realize all of the friendships we have gained and what a unique opportunity we have had. I have no doubt that each and every one of these players will be better baseball players and better people as a result of the experiences we have had this summer."

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