



STANFORD ATHLETICS

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BASEBALL RECAP

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*Trojans win first series at Sunken Diamond since 1999, while wrapping up first season series victory over the Cardinal since 1996

USC Takes Rubber Game Over Stanford, 6-1

Stanford, Calif. – USC (17-13, 4-2 Pac-10) earned its first series victory at Sunken Diamond since 1999 and also wrapped up its first season series triumph against Stanford (13-11, 2-4 Pac-10) since 1996 with a 6-1 win over the Cardinal in the rubber game of a three-game Pac-10 set on a damp and dark Sunday. Ryan Cook (3-3) notched the victory by holding the Cardinal to just one run on four hits and three walks, while striking out five over 8.1 innings in the longest start of his career. David Parrow (0.2 IP, 1 SO) got the final two outs for the Trojans in the bottom of the ninth.

Matt Cusick (3-4, 2 RBI), Hector Estrella (2-2, 2 2B, RBI) and Blake Sharpe (2-4, RBI) had multiple-hit games for a Trojan offense that out-hit Stanford, 11-4.

Stanford starter Matt Manship (1-3) took the loss despite keeping the Cardinal close by allowing just three runs (two earned) on seven hits and two walks, while striking out three over the first 6.0 innings.

Jason Castro doubled for the only Stanford extra-base knock, while the club did not have a player with more than one hit in the contest.

USC got all the scoring the team would need with a two-run third. Estrella led off with the first of his two doubles and then scored two batters later on an RBI single from Cusick, who would move to third when Sharpe followed with a single and score on Cyle Hankerd's sacrifice fly.

The Trojans scored an unearned run in the fifth to make it 3-0 when Baron Frost reached on a fielding error by Cardinal third baseman Chris Lewis, moved to second on Darin Vieira's sacrifice bunt and scored on the second consecutive double from Estrella.

Stanford scored its only run of the contest in the bottom of the sixth to cut the Trojan lead to 3-1. Castro led off with his double and moved to third on a single by Lewis but Cord Phelps then hit into a double play that allowed Castro to score but subdued the Cardinal rally.

USC added three insurance runs in the top of the eighth as Cardinal reliever Sean Ratliff (1.1 IP, 2 H, 3 R, 3 ER, 2 BB, 1 SO) was charged with all three. The Trojans loaded the bases off Ratliff when Frost and Vieira started the inning with back-to-back singles and Estrella was intentionally walked following Daniel Perales' sacrifice bunt. Pinch-hitter Josh Fogel and Cusick greeted Erik Davis (0.2 IP, 2 H) with back-to-back RBI singles for the first two Trojan runs of the inning, before Austin Yount (1.2 IP) came on and hit Sharpe to force Estrella home with the final run of the contest.

Stanford hit into a season-high-tying three double plays in the game, while also having a runner picked off and another caught stealing. The Cardinal ended up leaving just one runner on base when pinch-hitter Brendan Domaracki led off the ninth with a single but was stranded there. Stanford had only one runner in scoring position other than Castro in the sixth with Cook twice retiring eight consecutive hitters.

"We just need to get better," said Stanford head coach Mark Marquess. "We really haven't played very good baseball in any phase of the game recently."

Stanford will now play five consecutive non-conference games beginning with a home contest versus Sacramento State this Tuesday, April 4 (6 pm, PT). The Cardinal returns to Pac-10 action at defending conference champion and 2005 College World Series participant Oregon State (Thursday-Saturday, April 13-15, 5 pm, 5 pm, 1 pm, PT).

NOTES

- New York Yankee players Mike Mussina and Alex Rodriguez were in attendance at the game one day prior to their scheduled 2006 MLB season-opener at Oakland on Monday ... Mussina played three seasons at Stanford from 1988-90
- Stanford lost four-of-six games to USC this season to drop its first season series to the Trojans since 1996
- Stanford lost a regular season home series to USC for the first time since 1999, snapping a string of six consecutive series victories over the Trojans at Sunken Diamond
- Stanford has now dropped three straight series to the Trojans for the first time since USC won nine consecutive games over the Cardinal by sweeping the final series between the clubs in 1995, as well as both series in 1996
- The one runner left on base by Stanford was a season-low
- The game last just 2:32 (one minute shy of Stanford's shortest game of the season)
- Stanford hit into a season-high-tying three double plays for the third time this season
- Michael Taylor had the fourth assist of his career when he threw out Darin Vieira at the plate for the final out in the top of the sixth

UPDATED PAC-10 STANDINGS (Does not include Sunday evening Arizona-Arizona State non-conference game)

California (4-2, ---, 16-12), USC (4-2, ---, 17-13), Arizona State (2-1, 0.5, 23-8), Washington State (3-3, 1.0, 21-9), Washington (3-3, 1.0, 20-11), Oregon State (1-2, 1.5, 19-8), UCLA (1-2, 1.5, 16-13), Arizona (1-2, 1.5, 12-14), Stanford (2-4, 2.0, 13-11)