



STANFORD ATHLETICS

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BASEBALL RECAP

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*Stanford starter Jeremy Bleich takes three-hit shutout into the ninth inning before Trojans score twice for win

Stanford Suffers Heartbreaking 2-1 Loss To No. 20 USC

Stanford, Calif. – Jeremy Bleich carried a three-hit shutout through eight innings but No. 20 USC (15-8) rallied for two runs in the top of the ninth to hand Stanford (10-8) a heartbreaking 2-1 non-conference loss on a beautiful Saturday afternoon at Sunken Diamond. Hector Estrella's two-out RBI single through the right side of the infield scored Lucas Duda with the game-winning run.

Duda had tied the game at 1-1 earlier in the inning when he singled home pinch-runner Spencer Pabst. Paul Koss retired the Cardinal in order in the bottom of the ninth and struck pinch-hitter Randy Molina for the final out to notch his 10th save of the season and the 30th of his career.

USC reliever Kevin Couture (2-0) earned the victory after limiting the damage in the Cardinal seventh following Adam Gaylord's RBI single that had brought home Cord Phelps for the first run of the game. Couture retired all five batters he faced with a pair of strikeouts, getting the two batters he saw in the seventh to leave a pair of Stanford runners stranded and setting down the Cardinal in order in the eighth. USC starter Brad Boxberger (6.1 IP, 6 H, 1 R, 1 ER, 1 BB, 1 SO) was also effective and had a shutout of his own until Gaylord's run-scoring hit.

Duda (3-4, 2B, RBI, SB) had half of USC's six hits, while Sean Ratliff (2-4, 2B, SB) was the only Stanford player with more than one of the six Cardinal hits.

Bleich (8.2 IP, 6 H, 2 R, 2 ER, 4 BB, 3 SO) was charged with the loss in the longest outing of his career.

"I should have gotten job in the ninth, and I didn't," said a subdued Bleich after the contest. "I've got to do a better job at finishing the job and obviously I will work at that."

Boxberger and Bleich traded zeros for the first six and a half innings with Bleich retiring nine in a row at one point and Boxberger setting down eight consecutive hitters at the height of his outing.

"Both guys pitched a good game, and it's unfortunate [Jeremy] had to lose that game, but they did a better job in the big spot that we did today," added Stanford head coach Mark Marquess.

Stanford did manage to get runners in scoring position in four of the first six frames before Boxberger got out of each jam but his own wildness cost him Stanford's lone run in the seventh when he walked Phelps and hit Ryan Seawell before Gaylord's hard groundball RBI single up the middle ended his outing.

The Trojans were able to get a runner in scoring position only three times in Bleich's first eight frames and never moved one past second base before Matt Cusick started the decisive ninth with a leadoff single. Pabst pinch-ran and stole second to get into scoring position but Bleich got J.J. Owen to line out to Michael Taylor in right field for the first out before Duda's single up the middle tied the game at 1-1. Bleich recovered to record the second out on a Johnny Bowden pop-up before issuing a walk to the switch-hitting former Stanford player Darren Gemoll to set up Estrella's game-winner.

Stanford and USC conclude the three-game series on Sunday (1 pm, PT). The Trojans have named LHP Tommy Milone (2-2, 5.74) as their probable starter for the contest, while the Cardinal has yet to announce a starter.

Tickets for the finale of the current USC series and all regular season Stanford Baseball home games are available online at gostanford.com or by calling 1-800-STANFORD. On game days, tickets may be purchased at the Sunken Diamond Ticket Office window beginning one hour before first pitch. For group ticket information (groups of 10 or more), call 650-725-2876.

NOTES

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- Jeremy Bleich's 8.2 inning outing was the longest of his career
- Michael Taylor (RF) and Sean Ratliff (CF) have now each started all 18 games this season
- Michael Taylor extended his string of consecutive games started to 134 dating back to the 2005 season
- Michael Taylor extended his hit streak to a career-high-tying nine games with a first inning single
- Sean Ratliff extended his career-high hit streak to five games
- Stanford has now lost four straight series and four consecutive games overall to USC
- Stanford's third straight loss overall equals its longest losing skid of the 2007 season
- Stanford lost for the second consecutive time at Sunken Diamond after winning its first nine home games of 2007
- Stanford fell to 1-7 against ranked opponents this season in contrast to its 9-1 record versus unranked clubs
- USC is the only opponent on Stanford's 2007 schedule that holds an advantage in the all-time series versus Stanford with a career 209-159-3 record against the Cardinal
- The game lasted just 2:32 to snap a string of four consecutive contests that had clocked in at over three hours
- Stanford lost for just the second time in one-run games as the Cardinal fell to 4-2 in those games this season
- Stanford lost for the first time this season when leading after eight innings to fall to 9-1 in those contests
- Stanford recorded its first errorless game of the season