

Orange Lutheran High Wins National Classic

By **Nathan Rode** (*Baseball America*)



Jason Martin (Photo by Alyson Boyer Rode)

The last time Orange (Calif.) Lutheran High appeared in the championship game of the National Classic, it had three Division I arms in the rotation—one that made his major league debut on April 4 (Mariners righthander Brandon Maurer) and another who will likely do the same sometime this season (Pirates righthander Gerrit Cole).

The Lancers lost to Crespi High (Encino, Calif.) in the championship in 2008 and in the semifinals in 2010, but finally broke through this year. Orange Lutheran beat Cypress (Calif.) High 4-2 in last night's championship game to capture the 2013 Hard 9 National Classic title.

"It feels good," head coach Eric Borba said. "We've had a hard time putting things together this year. We'd win a couple and drop one. We couldn't get hot. It's nice to get four in a row and put it together with the win we had against (St. John) Bosco before the break. I think we're playing better baseball than we were at the beginning of the year, as far as total team. Earlier in the year we were either hitting or pitching. We weren't doing both at the same time. This week we were able to put both together for a little bit."

Outfielder Jason Martin earned tournament MVP honors after going 6-for-10 with a home run, four runs scored and three RBIs in four games.

"Martin was absolutely on fire this week," Borba said. "Every ball, he hit right on the nose."

Orange Lutheran began the season ranked No. 20 in the High School Top 25, but dropped out in the first in-season poll after a 5-2 start. The Lancers dropped two more games to Servite High (Anaheim) and Mater Dei High (Santa Ana, Calif.) and stood at 7-4 before reeling off five straight wins.

"It's a confidence builder," Borba said. "After losing to Servite and Mater Dei, I think our guys were questioning themselves a little bit. To get back on track this week and win the National Classic, it gives our guys that sense of confidence to that they can play with the big boys. We know that we can play with anybody and if we go out and play good baseball, we can be in the thick of it."