



2007 USA Youth (16 and under) World Championship Team

BARQUISIMETO, Venezuela – The Youth National Team captured gold at the World Youth Championship, defeating Brazil, 8-2, in the final of the Copa Simon Bolivar on Saturday night at Daniel Canonico Stadium.

Team USA jumped out to a 4-0 lead in the top of the first. Shortstop Nick Franklin (Longwood, Fla.) doubled to right to start the game. Third baseman Zach Vincej (Saugus, Calif.) followed with an RBI-double to the gap in right center to drive in Franklin. After stopping at second, Vincej advanced to third when Brazil centerfielder Oscar Nakaoshi missed his cutoff man. Shortstop Felipe Burin then tried to throw Vincej out at third but his throw sailed over third baseman Daniel Katayama's head, allowing Vincej to trot home to put Team USA up 2-0. Leftfielder Max Stassi (Yuba City, Calif.) followed with a single up the middle to chase Brazil starter Renan Hidani out of the game after only three batters. Stassi would then steal second before moving to third on a groundout by first baseman Austin Maddox (Jacksonville, Fla.). Two batters later, catcher Luke Bailey (La Grange, Ga.) blasted a 2-1 pitch to straightaway center for a two-run homer.

In the top of the third, right fielder Randal Grichuk (Rosenberg, Texas) belted a one-out solo shot over the wall in center to give Team USA a 5-0 lead. The home run was his third of the World Championship, which led all players.

Brazil threatened to score in the bottom of the third with runners on the corners and one out but USA starter Zach Lee (McKinney, Texas) got Katayama to ground into an inning-ending 6-4-3 double play.

Team USA added a pair of runs in the top of the fourth to extend their lead to 7-0. Franklin drew a leadoff walk and a pitch to begin the frame hit Vincej. Franklin would then advance to third when Stassi grounded into a 5-4-3 double play. Maddox followed with an RBI-double to center to score Franklin. Grichuk then sent an RBI-single through the left side to plate Maddox.

Brazil scored in the bottom of the fourth on an RBI-double by Burin to cut USA's lead to 7-1.

Brazil added a run in the bottom of the fifth on an RBI-single by second baseman Leonardo Tsuzuki to make it a 7-2 ballgame.

Team USA scored again in the top of the ninth to take an 8-2 lead. Second baseman Justin Charles (Galt, Calif.) lined a two-out single to left center to keep the inning alive. Centerfielder Andrew Aplin (Suisun, Calif.) followed with a single up the middle to move Charles to third. Shortstop Nolan Fontana (Winter Garden, Fla.) was then hit by a pitch to load the bases. Charles would then score on a wild pitch for the game's final run.

Aplin led Team USA at the plate, going 4-for-5 on the night. Grichuk finished 3-for-4 with a solo home run and two RBI, Charles was 3-for-4 with a run scored and Bailey went 1-for-4 with a two-run jack. Maddox finished 1-for-3 with an RBI-double and a run scored, Franklin was 1-for-4 with a double and two runs scored, Vincej went 1-for-2 with an RBI-double and a run scored and Stassi finished 1-for-2 with a run scored.

Lee picked up his second win of the World Championship after holding Brazil to one earned run on six hits in five innings of work. Lee struck out eight in the victory, including the first four batters he faced. A.J. Cole (Winter Springs, Fla.) fanned three in two scoreless frames, while Franklin retired all six batters he faced, including two strikeouts.

Charles earned tournament MVP honors, while also taking home trophies for highest batting average and most RBI. Grichuk received a trophy for most home runs and Aplin was named the tournament's best centerfielder.

Team USA will travel home on Monday.

By Lee Aldrige (USA Media staff writer)