

USA Baseball wins 18U Baseball World Championship

Dixie Baseball well represented in the event with seven Dixie national team TOS players
Christian Arroyo – Dixie player from Brooksville, Florida named Tournament MVP

18U: USA defeats Canada, 6-2, for gold

USA claims first 18U World Championship since 1999

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SEOUL, South Korea -- Keegan Thompson struck out Gareth Morgan for the final out, and found himself on the bottom of the United States' celebratory dogpile after winning the XXV IBAF 18U Baseball World Championship. The 6-2 victory over Canada gives USA its first world championship at the 18U level since 1999. Reese McGuire went 2-for-3 with two crucial RBIs as USA avenged a 1-0 extra-inning loss to Canada earlier in the tournament.

Christian Arroyo was named most valuable player of the tournament after hitting .387 with 11 RBIs and committing just two errors in 67 chances, playing every inning at shortstop.

Jeremy Martinez and Chris Okey -- the only two returners from the 2011 Pan American gold-medal team -- each added an RBI, and Ian Clarkin, Ryan Olson and Thompson combined to allow four hits over nine innings while striking out six.

Clarkin set the tone in the first inning for the United States. The southpaw came out firing, striking out the first batter of the game on a 92-mph fastball. Clarkin fell behind 3-0 on the next batter before working his way back and getting a groundout to first. A broken bat dribbler back to Clarkin was the final out of the first inning.

After Canadian starter Cal Quantrill matched Clarkin in the bottom of the first, Canada got the first run of the game. Jesse Hodges led off the second with a bloop single into center field, and moved over to third on a broken-bat single by Brett Siddall. After a lazy fly ball was too shallow to score a run, Morgan grounded out to first base to score Hodges for the first run of the game. USA responded quickly. McGuire led off with the first hit of the game for USA. He was followed by Okey, who doubled down the right-field line. As McGuire was rounding third, he collided with the third baseman, interference was called and McGuire was awarded home.

USA got more offense in the bottom of the third inning. Garrett Williams walked on four pitches to get things started. Ryan Boldt dropped down a bunt for a single, and Dom Nunez sacrificed the pair over for Martinez. The three-hole hitter lined a basehit into right field to score Williams, and an errant throw by the right fielder allowed Boldt to dash home and Martinez to move all the way up to third with one out. After McGuire grounded out with the infield in, Okey ripped a line drive back up the middle to make the score 4-1.

Nathan Desouza -- the hero of the first meeting between the two North American teams in the world championships -- led off the fourth inning with a single into shallow right field. With Canada trying to close the gap, Clarkin got Hodges to ground into a momentum-killing 4-6-3 double play, and four pitches later got Siddall to fly out to center to end the inning.

A catcher's interference got Willie Abreu on base to start the bottom of the fourth inning. After Cavan Biggio singled, the pair executed a double steal to get runners in scoring position with no outs. Arroyo hit a ground ball to third and Abreu broke for home. The third baseman fired home, and Abreu collided with the catcher, who hung on to the ball for the out. Abreu was ejected following the play, causing the managers, umpires and IBAF tech commissioners to meet on the field, resulting in a lengthy delay. After several protests, the ejection stood and play resumed with runners on corners for USA.

Back to action, Canadian reliever Travis Seabrooke got back-to-back groundouts to end the inning and hold the score at 4-1. Canada would cut into the USA lead in the top of the fifth inning. Clarkin walked the first batter, Naylor, on four pitches, and he advanced to second on a wild pitch. A groundout moved him to third, and a second groundout scored him to make it 4-2. Clarkin got the next batter to fly out to right field to end the fifth inning.

Nunez reached on an error by the second baseman to start the fifth inning, forcing Canada to make another pitching change. The Canadians brought in right-hander Brock Dykxhoorn. He plunked Martinez, the first batter he faced. McGuire executed the sacrifice bunt to push the runners into scoring position, causing Canada to intentionally walk Okey to load the bases for Bryson Brigman.

Brigman squared up the 1-1 pitch right into the glove of the second baseman who flipped to second for the inning-ending double play, holding the score at 4-2. With one out in the top of the sixth, Hann reached on a throwing error by Arroyo. An intentional walk and a hit batter loaded the bases with two outs, but Clarkin got a ground ball to Brigman at second to end the inning and keep USA on top.

Clarkin gave way to Olson in the top of the seventh. The southpaw finished with six strong innings, allowing two runs on four hits, striking out two and walking two. He would end up as the winning pitcher. Olson picked up right where Clarkin left off, announcing his presence quickly, and using fastballs and breaking balls to strikeout the first two batters before battling from behind in the count to get a fly out to right field to end the inning.

Boldt got the offense restarted in the bottom of the seventh. He led off with a single to right field and was sacrificed to second by Nunez. With one out, Canada elected to intentionally walk Martinez to set up a lefty-lefty matchup with McGuire. The gamble backfired as McGuire ripped a line drive, deflecting off Kellogg, passed a diving Mitchell Triolo at shortstop for a two-RBI double, putting USA up 6-2.

Back out for the eighth, Olson walked the first hitter, but it was quickly erased on a 5-4-3 double play. Olson got the next batter to ground out to the second baseman to end the frame with a four-run lead for the United States. After being held scoreless in the bottom of the eighth, USA called on Thompson out of the bullpen. Thompson got Hodges to fly out to right field for the first out, then struck out Siddall swinging. With two outs, Thompson issued a walk, but came back to strikeout Morgan to send the United States players into a frenzy, dog-piling on the field.

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With the victory, USA moves to within 23 points of Cuba in the IBAF World Rankings, the closest the United States has been to the top spot in quite some time.

Post-tournament awards:

Christian Arroyo - Most Runs Batted In (10)
Ryan Boldt - Most Stolen Bases (12)
Ryan Boldt - Most Runs Scored (11)
Garrett Williams - Best Earned Run Average (0.00 in 11 2/3 inn.)
Christian Arroyo - Most Valuable Player

All-Star team:

Christian Arroyo - Shortstop
Jeremy Martinez - Designated Hitter