

FINCH TOSSES ONE HITTER AS US CAPTURES VICTORY OVER CANADA

Aug. 18, 2004, 10:34 a.m. (ET)

Athens, GREECE – In front of the largest crowd thus far at Helliniko Stadium totaling 3,215, the USA Softball Olympic team continued to dominate its opponents with a 7-0 run-rule victory over Canada. Improving to 5-0 and securing a play-off round berth, the 7-0 shutout marked the third run-rule victory for Team USA in Olympic competition. The U.S. has not allowed a run while outscoring opponents 31-0.

With the fourth one-hit performance, right-handed pitcher Jennie Finch (La Mirada, CA) led the U.S. contingent with eight strikeouts while the bats continued to perform with 11 hits and seven runs.

“Jennie really did a good job tonight moving the ball and I was very proud of her,” head coach Mike Candrea said. “We have to continue to get better at this game and be the aggressor. When you are ‘on’ offensively you have to stay on and keep things up because it is just as easy to have a bad outing. We take everything game by game because each day is a new situation.”

For the fourth time in five games, the U.S. manufactured its first run in the first inning. Like usual, Watley, who is leading the U.S. batting at .471, led off the inning with an infield hit and Leah O’Brien-Amico (Chino Hills, CA) laid down a sacrifice bunt to advance Watley to second. A fielder’s choice by Crystl Bustos (Canyon Country, CA) recorded the second out of the inning but Lisa Fernandez (Long Beach, CA) kept the U.S. alive with a chopping infield base hit to put two runners on board. A walk issued to Stacey Nuveman (La Verne, CA) loaded the bases and Canadian pitcher Auburn Sigurdson pushed the first U.S. run across after hitting Loveianne Jung (Fountain Valley, CA) with an inside pitch.

The U.S. bats continued to heat up adding two more runs in the second. Jessica Mendoza (Camarillo, CA) led off the inning by being hit by a pitch and Watley singled for the second time in the game. With two outs the runners looked as if they would be stranded, but the bat of Bustos launched a towering shot to centerfield that was dropped by Canadian outfielder Rachel Schill to score Mendoza and Watley. Increasing its lead to 4-0, the U.S. led off the bottom half of the third with a base hit through the left side by Nuveman. The sweet swing of Kretschman, batting .400, provided her third double of the Games plating pinch-runner Tairia Mims Flowers (Tucson, AZ).

The Canadians threatened to score in the top of the fourth when the U.S. saw just its second runner of the tournament reach third base. An infield base hit from Kristy Odamura followed by a fielding error from Loveianne Jung put runners at the corners with no outs. The U.S. silenced the Maple Leaf rally with two strikeouts and play at the plate that saw Jung redeem herself with a solid throw to Nuveman that nailed Odamura at the home.

The U.S. offense flexed its muscles in the fourth as Bustos led off the second half of the inning with her second solo home run of the Games. Fernandez followed the

Bustos performance with a solo shot of her own to take a 6-0 advantage. Bustos and Fernandez helped seal the run-rule victory in the fifth with a left field line base hit from Bustos followed by an RBI single to right center for Fernandez. Bustos finished the day going 2-for-4 while Fernandez led the charge with a 3-for-4 performance and two RBI. Watley, who through five games is 8-of-17 (.471), had a 2-for-4 outing.

With two games left in round-robin action, Team USA will battle host country Greece on Thursday, August 19 at 12 noon at Helliniko Stadium before closing out round-robin play against Chinese Taipei on August 20 at 12 noon.

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