

FERNANDEZ OVERPOWERS GREEK TEAM

Aug. 19, 2004, 10:32 a.m. (ET)

Athens, GREECE – Two-time Olympic gold medalist Lisa Fernandez (Long Beach, CA) utilized her skills on both sides of the field today as she led the U.S. to its fourth run-rule victory with a 7-0 win against host Greece. Going 2-for-2 from the plate with an RBI, as well as, a one-hit performance from the circle, Fernandez totaled five strikeouts to move Team USA to 6-0 in competition which secures a spot in the medal round. The U.S. has yet to allow a run in Olympic competition and is holding opponents to a mere .070 batting average. Outscoring its opponents 38-0, five of the six games have been one hit performances while at the plate the U.S. is hitting .348 as a team.

“Today was a great outing for us,” Fernandez said. “We really stepped it up on so many levels. We have to keep steady throughout this process and just take each game one at a time.”

The loudest crowd of the tournament with chants of ‘HELLAS’ and ‘USA’ throughout the stadium, the game remained scoreless through the first two innings before the U.S. turned the tide. The bat of U.S. veteran Fernandez came alive to take the 1-0 lead in the bottom of the third inning. Helping her cause from the circle, the 5’6” legend connected on a two out RBI single through the left side to score Laura Berg (Santa Fe Springs, CA) who reached on a single and moved to second on a sacrifice bunt by Natasha Watley (Irvine, CA).

A Jessica Mendoza (Camarillo, CA) stand-up double to right center gave the U.S. its second run of the game scoring Lovieanne Jung (Fountain Valley, CA), who earlier reached base on a walk. The U.S. bats then opened the lead to 4-0 after a base hit from Berg, who finished the game going 2-for-2, put two runners on board. Watley advanced on a fielder’s choice before a chopping base hit up the middle from Leah O’Brien Amico (Chino Hills, CA) plated Berg and Watley for the solid lead.

The U.S. offense continued to punish the Greeks with three more runs in the fifth to conclude the run-rule victory. A lead-off walk to Fernandez put the first runner on before Stacey Nuveman (La Verne, CA) singled down the leftfield line. Another base on balls to Jung loaded the bases when a wild pitch scored pinch-runner Amanda Freed (Cypress, CA). An RBI ground from Kelly Kretschman (Indian Harbour Beach, FL) added the sixth run before a Mendoza single through the right side brought the seventh run across home plate.

Fernandez, Berg and Mendoza each contributed two hits in the game while Amico and Mendoza tallied two RBI a piece.

The U.S. will wrap-up round-robin play on Friday, August 20 against Chinese Taipei at 12 noon. At 6-0, the U.S. will enter the playoff bracket at either the No. 1 or No. 2 seed on Saturday morning and are now guaranteed a medal at these games.

“We know the tradition of USA Softball and we came to Athens to win gold,” said Mendoza. “Anything less would be a huge disappointment and unacceptable for the standards set for us.”

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