

Panthers wiggle out of two bases loaded jams & use big 6th inning to win CIF-SS D6

Title:

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Five years ago current UCR baseball coach Troy Percival inherited a bleak situation in the Moreno Valley High School baseball program. Equipment and facilities were severely below par and so were the skill levels of his new charges. In two years he was able to upgrade everything associated with Vikings baseball and guided them to a first round playoff loss before leaving for UC Riverside. Brad Allcock was named skipper in 2016 and the Vikings have not missed a beat winning two league titles and reaching two title games in his three years at the helm. Going back to 2015 that number is three league titles in four years. However the Vikings are still in search of their first section title after falling 6-1 to Pasadena Poly (The Division's overall #1 seed) at UC Riverside's baseball complex in a CIF-SS Division 6 title game.

Right out of the gate Moreno Valley had an opportunity to score against Panther starter Matt Queen (W, 6 IP, 4 Hits, 5 K's, 5 BB's, 101 Pitches). Jacob Curriel led off the game by reaching on an errant throw which pulled Poly first baseman David Mathias off the bag. Gustavo DeJesus then singled to give the Vikings runners at first and third with no outs. Noah Flores flew out to shallow center field and Curriel was thrown out attempting to tag up and score by Panther Center Fielder Jackson Hayes who had fingerprints all over this game defensively. Eric Carmona reached on a walk and David DeJesus had an infield single reloading the bases. Dyvon Brown struck out to end the threat. On the Hayes put out of Curriel a brief discussion amongst the umpires regarding obstruction was had but their original call stood.

With one out in the Panther second inning two walks (David Mathias & Ben Bryson) along with a bloop single from Ryan Clayton loaded the bases. A sacrifice fly to left field from Joe Masters scored Mathias. A Hayes groundout to shortstop prevented further damage for Moreno Valley who trailed at that point 1-0.

In the Pasadena Poly third a one out walk from Ty Evans and single from Queen created a runners on first and second with one out situation. A balk was then called against Vikings freshman starter Anthony Silvas (L, 4 1/3 IP, 4 Hits, 2 Runs, 3 BB's, 5 K's) advancing the runners to second and third bases. Showing impressive poise in his maiden voyage on the big stage Silvas induced a popup and got a strikeout to get out of the frame with no damage.

Moreno Valley had another chance to score in the top of the fourth. Carmona led off the inning with a walk but then was caught in a rundown attempting to advance on David DeJesus' single for out one. With two outs Miguel Campos drew a walk putting runners on first and second and two outs but the Panthers again escaped harm when Mark Cerrato grounded out to Queen ending the threat.

Pasadena Poly added to their lead in the top of the fifth with another run making it 2-0 after five innings. After a strikeout of Hayes to lead off the inning two consecutive singles from Evans and Franco Alonso forced Allcock to change pitchers. David DeJesus took the mound and gave up another single to Queen which loaded the bases with one out. Another sacrifice fly ,this time from Cameron McFarlane, scored the second Panther run. Mathias drew a walk before Ryan Clayton's strikeout ended the inning with Pasadena Poly ahead 2-0.

Moreno Valley let another chance to score with bases loaded and two outs fall by the wayside in their half of the sixth inning and trailed 2-0 with three outs to play. With one out Carmona reached base by virtue of a walk from Queen. Then George Rodriguez ,pinch hitting for Brown, reached on another walk and Campos got on with a single before Cerrato struck out to nip another Viking rally in the bud.

Nine Panthers batted in a four run bottom of the sixth which stretched Pasadena Poly's lead to 6-0. Ben Bryson led off the frame with a single but did not advance past second base as Masters grounded into a fielder's choice. A walk from Hayes gave the Panthers two on and one out as Moreno Valley turned to Curriel for relief. With two outs walks from Evans and Queen led to a third Pasadena Poly run and more separation on the scoreboard. McFarlane's two RBI single with two outs made it 5-0 Poly and another run scored after Mathias reached on an error making it 6-0. Curriel struck out Clayton to end the inning but not before blowing this title game wide open.

Moreno Valley attempted to make things interesting despite the deficit in their final at-bat. Anthony Ruff reached on an two base throwing error to lead off the seventh inning and eventually scored off a wild pitch. Cerrato reached on another error ,this time in right field, and Carmona got aboard with a single before David DeJesus' flyout ended the game.

Afterwards Vikings coach Brad Allcock spoke to the media and said about his team's second appearance in a title game "We had opportunities early. Their pitcher did a great job of keeping the ball down but despite that our guys had some pretty productive at bats. We made some baserunning mistakes early and I thought if we could strike first it might change the game. They made some huge plays defensively that were just rally killers. We just couldn't get that one clutch hit today."

In all ten Vikings runners were left on base as opposed to nine for Pasadena Poly.

I opened by asking about what two straight title runs have done to change the perception of his program and Allcock remarked "Thru fundraising and upgrading our field and equipment we've made our field one of the nicest around. Then came the development of these kids and now our 8th graders are looking forward to coming here instead of transferring out. Five or six years ago we weren't even thought of and now we've made two straight title game appearances. We're a program now and not nine guys taking the field 30 days a year."

Continuing on that theme Jacob Curriel ,a Vikings senior, said “All the athletes support each other now. Everyone asks us what time we’re playing and how we’re doing. We’re all one. We’re all Vikings.”

Freshman starting pitcher Anthony Silvas said of pitching on a college mound for the first time “People put a lot of pressure on me but I just focused on the catcher and batter. It’s tough losing knowing we were so close to a title.”

Poly head coach Mack Paciorek also spent some time with the media joined by catcher Joe Masters, winning pitcher Matt Queen and outfielder Cameron McFarlane. Paciorek takes home a title in his first year as skipper and remarked “Credit goes where credit belongs: the players. It was nice to see the bottom of our lineup get things going and then late get things rolling top to bottom.”

The Panthers had scored 39 runs in four prior games of postseason competition but were held to two thru five. About their four run outburst in the sixth Paciorek said “Our guys at bats got better thru the course of the game and we capitalized on a couple of errors.”

Poly starter Matt Queen was pulled from Tuesday's semifinal win after fighting a migraine. He remarked about the situation “It was unlucky in the Pomona game because I really wanted to go another one but in the end being able to go six innings today felt awesome.”

About escaping two bases loaded situations against the Vikings the senior pitcher remarked “I’ve had the bases loaded a few times during postseason so I’m a bit more used to it now and my nerves were a bit more calm. It was a huge confidence boost to get that strikeout ending their sixth.”

Masters remarked about being taken out in round two a year ago “It was a motivator. At the end of the day we realized this year that there were no excuses. That mentality stuck with us all the way thru.”

McFarlane said about his two RBI single in the sixth “Sometimes you start really slow and sometimes you put something together because your team needs it in a big spot. After that I felt like we couldn't be stopped.”

Leading Performers: Pasadena Poly (27-3)

Queen-2 for 3 with a walk

On the Mound>>>>W, 6 IP, 101 Pitches, 4 Hits, 5 K’s, 5 BB’s)

Cameron McFarlane-1 for 3 with 3 RBI

Leading Performers: Moreno Valley (22-8)

David DeJesus-2 for 4

Anthony Silva- L, 4 ⅓ IP, 4 Hits, 2 Runs, 3 BB’s, 5 K’s

