

Cougars mount late rally but fall short as Corona takes a percentage point lead in Big VIII:

R-H-E

Norco (6-3 Overall, 2-2 Big VIII): 0-0-0-0-2-2-0=4-9-1

Corona (7-2 Overall, 3-1 Big VIII) 0-0-4-1-0-0-x=5-6-2

By: Derryl Trujillo
Inland Sports Senior Writer

Corona, CA (Lyle Wilkerson Field)-

In the movie Apollo 13 there's a line where Tom Hanks ,playing the role of mission commander Jim Lovell, says "There's no such thing as routine" when asked whether America had taken lunar success for granted. That same remark could be made in describing Big VIII League baseball where no lead is safe until a 21st out is recorded. Corona High School used a four run third inning to jump out in front against Norco on Thursday afternoon at Lyle Wilkerson Field. Then the Cougars mounted a furious rally in their last three at bats putting up four runs and getting an opportunity with a go ahead run at bat but fell 5-4.

With Santiago and King idle due to poor field conditions as a result of the rain from earlier this week Corona holds a percentage point lead in Big VIII League baseball action.

Corona had a runner or runners on in each of the first five innings before being retired in order during their half of the sixth. Cougars starter Jarett Barbour used Houdini like escapes to get out of trouble in the first and second innings. With runners on first and second with one out in the first he induced a fielder's choice and strikeout of Daniel Cruz & Ramsses Fierro to escape trouble. Andrew Walters led off the second with a triple to left center field was stranded on two strikeouts and a line out.

It took until the third inning for Panther hitters to break thru and score. Isaiah Greene led off the inning with a solo home run (his second based on stats in MaxPreps) to straight away center field. Panthers starting pitcher Michael Flores drew a walk against his counterpart. Danny Perez flew out to center field before Corona got another run off a Daniel Cruz RBI double to right field made it 2-0. Damian Torres recorded a two RBI single scoring Fierro (reached on a walk) & Walters (single) giving the Panthers a 4-0 lead. Corona added one more run taking advantage of three straight walks to score a fifth run after Greene reached on an bunt single in their half of the fourth.

Down to their last nine outs the Cougars mounted an impressive rally to make things interesting. In the fifth Stewart Slessor reached on an error and scored on Maxwell Davis' two run home run to left field. Norco had another opportunity with two runners on and two outs as Menelik Israel

reached on a 2nd Panthers error (3B) & Ryan Lamastra singled. However Flores got Michael Forbes to pop out ending the threat. Facing runners on first and second with no outs Norco reliever Martin Delgado got out of a jam with two flyouts and one groundout to hold the deficit at 5-2.

Then in the sixth Norco struck for two more runs against Panther reliever Damien Torres. Christopher Conniff & Slessor recorded consecutive one out hits (single & double respectively). A sacrifice fly from Davis to center field scored Conniff and Jake Castaneda got a bloop single scoring Slessor. A Israel pop out ended the rally with two more stranded runners. Corona was retired in order for the first time during their half of the sixth.

With two outs in the seventh Norco got consecutive singles from Bryce Cermenelli & Conniff before Torres got Slessor to fly out ending the game.

Cougars coach Gary Parcell remarked afterwards "On Tuesday against Roosevelt we struggled swinging the bats and early on in this one I thought I made a mistake in adjusting our lineup. We got the ball in play but just took us too long to score. So far our pitching has been pretty solid but allowing eight walks will eventually come back to haunt you. I'm proud of the guys for fighting and we know two losses this week doesn't necessarily sink our chances of a title."

Panthers coach Andy Wise said "I'd really like to see us play a complete game. We did a poor job of playing defense behind Michael and when you give a team like Norco extra opportunities they can hurt you. I like where we're at so far but we need practice time more than any group I've had here."

Panther Notables:

Isaiah Greene>>2-3 with a home run (2nd) and walk
WP: Michael Flores>>5 IP, 4 Hits, 2 Runs
Save: Damien Torres>>2 IP, 4 Hits, 2 Runs, 1 HBP, 6 K's

Cougar Notables:

Maxwell Davis>>1-3 with a home run (1st) and 3 RBI
Bryce Cermenelli>>2-3
Christopher Conniff>>3-3
LP: Jarrett Barbour>>3 1/3 IP, 7 Hits, 5 Runs, 6 BB, 4 K's

