

Dream becomes reality for Cougars who earn trip to Dodgers Stadium with Tuesday win:

R: H: E:

Crescenta Valley (20-10 Overall): 1-0-0-0-1-1-0=3 14 2

Norco (20-11 Overall) #10 seed: 0-1-0-2-1-0-X=4 9 0

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Norco, CA (Don Harris Field)-

When a young boy picks up his first ball, bat, and glove he dreams of playing on the game's biggest stages. Dodger Stadium, site of the CIF-SS baseball championships in divisions one, two, and three, would qualify as one of those most iconic venues. Norco & Crescenta Valley both started Tuesday with those dreams but only one team could earn that opportunity. Behind a stellar defense which turned double plays in each of the game's first three innings & timely hitting #10 Norco advanced to Saturday's final by a score of 4-3.

Will Grimm and Colby Rees led off the Falcons first inning with consecutive singles against Norco starter Justin Drury. They were erased as Chase Smith laid down a bunt which resulted in the game's first double play. Brian Ghattas walked and was scored on an RBI triple down the left field line by Noah Maddox. That out Norco needed to escape the inning came one batter too late as Isaiah Song finished with an frame ending ground ball.

In the Falcons second inning a one out walk was erased by an inning ending double play.

Norco got that run back in their half of the second as Michael Forbes singled with one out and advanced to third base when Maxwell Davis reached on an error. A balk by Maddox, Crescenta Valley's starter, scored Forbes and tied the game. Davis was stranded as Zane O'Donnell grounded out.

Crescenta Valley had something cooking in the third inning as singles by Grimm, Smith, and Ghattas loaded the bases with one out. Maddox flew out to left field for the second out. Norco then executed a perfect relay throw (LF Ryan Lamastra to Drury and C Bryce Cermeneli) to preserve the tied score catching Grimm attempting to tag up and score.

Norco got a lead for good in their half of the fourth. Christopher Conniff walked while Slessor and Forbes recorded consecutive singles to load the bases with no outs. Davis was hit by a pitch to score the inning's first run & an Elias Pacheco flyout scored another Cougar run making their lead 3-1.

Smith and Ghattas had consecutive singles to lead off the fifth inning. Mattox then grounded into a fielder's choice advancing Smith to third base. An RBI single by Isaac Sung scored Smith bringing the Falcons to within a run at 3-2. Consecutive groundouts prevented further damage.

Menelik Israel led off the Norco fifth with a double to left field and advanced to third on an error. He was scored on a one out double by Cermeneli to restore a two run lead at 4-2.

Forbes ,the likely starter for Saturday's final, was tasked with earning the six out save. Grimm made it a one run game ,this time at 4-3, by connecting on a solo home run to right center field. Victor Pratt reached on an infield single and Smith was hit by a pitch giving Crescenta Valley two on with one out in their half of the sixth. Ghattas and Mattox were retired on a flyout and strikeout respectively to escape the jam.

During his postgame interview Forbes remarked "Every kid growing up dreams of playing on the big stage and I'm super excited for the opportunity to pitch at Dodger Stadium on Saturday. When a team gets that many hits off of your pitcher it's the defense's job to make sure that we minimize or limit damage and that was huge in getting this win."

In the Falcons seventh two flyouts (including one brilliant catch by Israel in center field preventing a sure triple) and a strikeout sent Norco onto Saturday's final.

Cougars coach Gary Parcell remarked afterwards "We turned some key double plays behind Justin to prevent some huge innings by them. Offensively we came into this game planning on taking some chances and they paid off for us. I'm a huge Dodger fan so to get to finish this journey with these guys on that field is a dream come true."

Crescenta Valley coach Phil Lopez said in defeat "As crazy as it sounds this game turned for us in the first inning by not putting up more than the one run. If we're able to put a three or four spot up there it's a different story. It hurts today but tomorrow we'll move on and get ready for next year."

Falcons Notables:

LP: Noah Mattox 4 IP, 5 Hits, 3 Runs, 1 K, 1 BB

Will Grimm>>4-4 with 1 RBI

Victor Parrott>>2-4

Chase Smith>>2-3

Brian Ghattas>>2-3 with BB

Cougar Notables:

WP: Justin Drury 5 IP, 12 Hits, 2 Runs, 0 K's, 2 BB's

Bryce Cermeneli>>2-3 with 1 RBI

Michael Forbes>>2-3 & 2 IP, 2 Hits, 1 Run, 2 K's, 0 BB's

