

Rustich stymies Gold Sox

By ["mailto:matt_o'donnell@link.freedom.com"](mailto:matt_o'donnell@link.freedom.com) Matt O'Donnell/Appeal-Democrat

May 12, 2005

At 6-foot-6, 220 pounds, Brant Rustich stood as an imposing figure on the mound Friday night in Marysville.

Hard to fathom that Rustich wasn't even in UCLA's starting rotation this spring.

Rustich was top-notch against the Yuba-Sutter Gold Sox, going the distance as the Santa Barbara Foresters won the first game of the California Collegiate League series, 3-0.

The first-place Foresters (29-8, 11-2) are now up two full games over the Gold Sox (28-9, 11-6) in the race for the league title.

"He's a good pitcher," said Gold Sox manager Brad Peek. "It seemed to me that he threw 85 percent fastballs. We actually got into some hitting counts, but we usually weren't quick enough with the bats."

Quite a change from teams like the Folsom Pioneers, who were lucky to break 80 mph.

Rustich (4-0) was clocked as fast as 97 and consistently in the 90s on the stadium radar gun. The right-hander struck out eight, allowed two hits, walked one and hit one.

"He really wanted that ball in the ninth inning," said Santa Barbara manager Bill Pintard. "He was still popping the glove at 90."

It was a tough-luck loss for Yuba-Sutter starter Craig Ayers (4-2). The right-hander from Northern Colorado went 7 2/3 innings, allowing three hits while fanning seven and walking three.

Two of the three runs he allowed were unearned.

"We've said it before, but he really only had one bad inning," Peek said. "He was pretty damn good tonight, and he really should have been out of that inning."

Dooley Prince lofted Ayers' first pitch of the game over the fence, just above the yellow line in right field.

Prince, a left fielder who played in the College World Series for the University of Texas this year, was a pain for Yuba-Sutter in the aforementioned second inning as well.

Ayers looked like he was going to work out of a bases-loaded jam in that inning. Josh Sanchez lined out for the second out, but Dooley hit a tapper to the right side.

First baseman A.J. Valentine and second baseman Ryan Angel crossed signals on the ball. Neither ended up making the play with the ball trickling off Angel's glove and into right field. Curtis Ledbetter and Travis DeBondt each scored on the play to make it 3-0.

"Angel called (Valentine) off, but Valentine blocked his view for just a split second," Peek said. "The bottom line is, you don't score any runs, you don't win."

Said Pintard, "They made a mistake, and we capitalized on it. If we don't score there, it's still 1-0 and we're all nervous."

Ayers settled down from there, retiring 17 in a row at one point. Peek lifted the righty with two outs in the eighth after Aaron Bates broke that string with a single to center.

The only two hits Rustich allowed came with two outs. Frank Jeney doubled over Dooley's head in left field the third, and Jason Searle singled to left in the fourth.

Notes: Angel's hitting streak ended at eight games ... Yuba-Sutter was shut out for the third time in two years ... Prince's homer was the first by an opponent this year in Marysville ... Porter now has 38 strikeouts and only four walks in 282/3 innings ... Valentine is in a 2-for-17 funk.

Learn more about your privacy options