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Orinda Spartans Defeat Pleasant Hill Hawks

Submitted by Tom McConnell

The Orinda Spartans have spent the season to date trying to translate their talent into consistent victories. On Saturday, April 24, the Spartans appeared to have a breakthrough game, en route to an 8-3 victory over the Pleasant Hill Hawks in Pleasant Hill.

The Spartans carried a commanding 8-0 lead into the bottom of the seventh inning, the Hawks' final at-bat. But prior to that, the Spartans were engaged in a good old fashion pitching duel, as the score was actually 0-0 heading into the top of the fifth inning. All of this was particularly encouraging given that the Spartans played one of their worst games of the season earlier in the year against the Hawks, falling 18-8 back in late March in an error-ridden contest.

In this game, the Spartans played error-free baseball, making sparkling defensive plays throughout the contest to raise their league record to 8-5. Arguably the play of the game came in the very first inning with the Hawks batting and runners on second and third and two outs. The next Pleasant Hill batter hit a flare foul pop-up along the left field line; third baseman Eric Nyman made a running over-the-shoulder catch to end the scoring threat.

Shortstop Clayton Haskell played a phenomenal game defensively on Saturday, diving for balls throughout. In the seventh inning, with the Hawks mounting a moderate comeback, Haskell made a diving catch of a short flare to left center with runners on the corners. Haskell jumped to his feet to fire home, pitcher Dylan Kronenberg cut the ball off and alertly threw behind the runner to third baseman Connor Jackson, who stepped on third for a double play.

The Hawks went on to score three two out runs.

The Spartans' pitching was as brilliant as its defense, as Andrew Deaver, Ben Hoxie and Eric Nyman all threw two shut-out innings to hold the Hawks scoreless for the first six innings of the contest.

It wasn't until the fifth inning that the Spartans were able to get anything going offensively. In that inning, Deaver and Jackson led off with back to back singles and Clayton Stehr finally gave his teammates a lead with some solid situational hitting, grounding out in the infield to drive in Deaver and give the Spartans the lead. Hoxie then followed with a clutch single to drive in Jackson to extend the Spartans lead to 2-0. One inning later, center fielder Ryan Anderson, the only Spartan with two hits on the day, singled to ignite the next scoring rally. After Anderson stole second, Nyman drove him in with a single and Kronenberg then drove in Nyman with a rocket down the left field line. Kronenberg eventually scored when Will McConnell drove a line drive over the center fielder's head for an RBI double. The Spartans then scored three more in their final at-bat, capped by a two run single by outfielder Danny Ritelli.

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