

Titans' closer Graham Marshall secures a doubleheader sweep by notching two saves against the Mississauga Terriers

Titans' 17U closer Graham Marshall earned two saves on Sunday to seal a doubleheader sweep over the Mississauga Terriers in Canadian Premier Baseball League action at St. Andrew's College.

Marshall closed his club's 7-4 win in Game 1 by striking out the side in the seventh and was summoned from the pen in Game 2 to lock up a narrow 6-5 victory.

Marshall was masterful in his second appearance of the day.

The steady right-handed closer struck out the only batter he faced in the sixth inning to stifle a Terriers rally. He earned his second save of the day in the seventh inning by striking out three of the four batters he faced with the tying run at second base.

The lanky, drop-down closer--whose pitches have deceptive movement--was happy to preserve two comeback victories for his teammates.

"We bounced back really well today as a team. We were down in both games, but the guys were into the games and got some big hits when we needed it. Coach McKiernan told us we needed to be less selfish during our at-bats and the guys responded well."

When asked if he's ever earned two saves three hours apart, Marshall admitted he hadn't and stated "It's pretty cool. I'm happy with the two saves in a day, but I was just a part of the wins. The guys hit much better today to win those games."

17U Titans Head Coach Eddie McKiernan--a former California High School Athlete of the Year and a AAA pitcher in the LA Angels system--concurred with his modest closer.

"We talked about getting quality at-bats today in Game 1 and got 20+ quality at-bats, including plating four runs in the bottom of the first after falling behind 3-0."

McKiernan was also impressed with the resolve of his Game 1 starter Noah Durance.

"Noah settled in after surrendering a lead-off home run and went 6+ innings for us. He threw strikes and let us play clean defense behind him."

After Durance walked the Terriers lead-off hitter at the top of the seventh, the reliable Marshall struck out the side to preserve the 7-4 win.

In Game 2, the Titans-Terriers tilt followed a similar storyline with the visitors from Mississauga jumping out to a 4-2 lead on Titans' starter Jordan Sfyndillis. Similar to Durance, Sfyndillis settled in, threw 5 1/3 innings, and kept the game close to allow his team's bats the wake-up call they needed.

The metaphorical alarm clock went off in the decisive third inning.

Trailing by 2 heading into the bottom of the third, the Titans plated four runs to take a 6-4 lead on the strength of timely RBI doubles by Aurora residents Ty Pridham (Aurora HS) and Luc Gelinas (St. Maximilian Kolbe CHS). A cluster of 3 big RBI hits in 4 at-bats--exactly what Coach McKiernan was looking for from his 17U lineup.

Spurred by his team's four-run rally, Sfyndillis preserved the new-found lead at the top of the 4th by striking out the first two Terriers he faced and made a slick fielding play of his own by snaring a sharp comebacker to induce a 1-3 groundball out to retire

the side. The Terriers pulled to within one on a decoy play with runners at first and third with two out. The Terriers sacrificed their baserunner in a rundown between first and second base to smuggle their baserunner from third across the plate before the Titans' rundown tag was applied.

With the Titans clinging to their precarious 6-5 lead, Marshall was called into the game at the top of the sixth to get the third out with the Terriers threatening with men in scoring position. Marshall obliged by notching a strikeout to extinguish the threat. The Titans' closer allowed a single after striking out the first two Terrier batters at the top of the seventh, but struck out the side to earn his second save of the day/his fifth of the CPBL season. Marshall's swing-and-miss stuff was on full display on Sunday as he struck out 7 of the 8 Terrier hitters he faced in 2 1/3 innings of scoreless relief.

In Game One of the 14U Mets-Titans doubleheader on Sunday afternoon at SAC, Caiden Moncada hit a two-run double at the bottom of the seventh inning to walk off Toronto 4-3. The Barrie resident is having a monster season for the Aurora/Newmarket-based Titans. His game-winning two-base hit off the centerfield fence elevated his batting average to just a tick under .500 (.495) and salvaged a win for the Titans who trailed the entire game until Moncada's decisive, quality at-bat.

By Jim Stewart