

Badger News

Sims Led Squad Repeats as International Champs

Wed, Jul 6, 2011 - [Baseball]

Spring Hill College Head Baseball Coach Frank Sims directed the American International Sports Tours (AIST) squad to its second consecutive championship of the prestigious Prague Baseball Week Tournament in the Czech Republic with an exciting 6-5 victory over the Czech squad in the finale.

Team AIST got off to a slow start in pool play losing to a fellow American squad in the



opening game. Team USSSA took a 5-1 decision in which AIST missed several scoring opportunities. "We had out chances to win," said Sims. "But we left too many men on base."

AIST then played France and took a 5-3 victory with incoming SHC junior Michael Moch recording the win on the mound. The third game of pool play saw the AIST team drop a 7-4 outcome to the host Czech Republic. "That was the weakest game we played in the entire tournament," said Sims. "We made three errors that resulted in five unearned runs."

In the final game of pool play, a team comprised of UCLA Alumni challenged Team AIST and the Sims' led squad shook off the previous game's doldrums to cruise to a 13-2 win.

Team AIST was seeded 2nd in bracket play and faced a surprising Slovakia team in the first round, taking a 5-2 victory. In the semifinals, AIST met Team USSSA in a rematch of the tournament's opening contest. SHC Badger Brian Sims led AIST with two hits including a double with three runs scored as the team avenged the earlier loss with a 5-2 win.

In the championship game, AIST faced another rematch versus the Czech Republic and jumped out to an early 6-2 advantage, but the hosts rebounded for three runs in the 7th inning to make it a 6-5 contest. In the bottom of the 9th frame, the Czech team rallied to put runners on first and third with two outs and the clean-up hitter standing at the plate. After classic duel between pitcher and batter that saw the count go full and several heart-stopping fouls, Team AIST forced a pop-out to the pitcher off a change up pitch for the final out of the championship as the USA squad launched into a heartfelt dog pile celebration in the middle of the diamond.

The tournament MVP was Drew Benton of Briar Cliff College who hit over .500 for the week-long tournament.

Several current and former Spring Hill College players played significant roles in the championship with second baseman and rising sophomore Brian Sims of Mobile hitting .466 (7-of-15) with a double, a triple four walks and four RBI. Fellow rising SHC sophomore and outfielder Matt Fuentes of Gainesville, Ga., hit .300 on the week.

Former Badger outfielder Ryan Hall of Ft. Myers, Fla., enjoyed his second consecutive outing with the team and collected six hits with eight RBI. Moch, a southpaw, threw a complete-game victory against France and collected the championship game win with five strong innings against the Czech Republic.

"All things considered, we started off slow, but finished strong," said Sims. "We played the championship game in front of a huge Czech crowd. Our kids were a little nervous, but overcame some early jitters to represent America in a first-class manner. I was very proud of all of them. Every player greatly contributed to this championship."

Last season, Sims' USA team defeated Russia 7-2 to bring home the event's



Coach Frank Sims successfully defended his international title

crown. No country has successfully defend the title for three years in the tournament's 30 year history, but Sims, who has spent his summers coaching and traveling with the AIST organization since 2001, looks forward to the challenge again in 2012. AIST provides high school, collegiate and adult athletic teams opportunities to travel to 22 different countries in various sports.