

Nebraska Baseball Team Sweeps Minnesota

Behind three solo home runs, including back-to-back homers by Austin Darby and Kale Kiser in the second inning and a homer by Chad Christensen in the third, the Nebraska baseball team (32-19, 12-9 Big Ten) completed a sweep of the Minnesota Golden Gophers (28-23, 10-11 Big Ten) on Sunday afternoon at Hawks Field with a 6-5 win.

The Huskers won each game of the three-game series by one run and put themselves back in the conference tournament with three Big Ten games remaining after entering the weekend in seventh place. The Huskers are now tied with Michigan State for fourth in the Big Ten standings, while Penn State and Indiana tied for second with 13-8 records and Purdue (16-5) is in first. The Huskers sit one game ahead of Ohio State (11-10) and are two games ahead of seventh-place Minnesota (10-11). Nebraska holds series wins over both Minnesota and Ohio State.

The win secured the Huskers' first sweep of a conference foe since NU swept Texas Tech at Hawks Field to end the 2010 season and put an exclamation point on Senior Day for four Husker seniors, including Kiser, Cory Burleson, Dexter Spitsnogle and Sam Stucky. Spitsnogle started the game for NU is his first career conference start and gave the Huskers 3.1 solid innings, as he gave up just one earned run on four hits and one walk, while striking out three. Luke Bubnitz and Tyler King then combined to throw the next 3.1 innings, before Dylan Vogt picked up his second save of the weekend with 2.1 innings of work down the stretch.

Offensively every starter picked up at least one hit on the afternoon, while Darby, Kiser and Michael Pritchard all recorded two hits. NU also stole two more bases on the day to go a perfect 6-for-6 on the weekend.

The Huskers broke open the scoring in the second when Darby tattooed a 2-1 offering from Austin Lubinsky that hit the scoreboard in right-center field. NU was quickly up 2-0 after Kiser launched Lubinsky's next pitch into the right-field bullpen. It was the first time NU had hit back-to-back homers since Cody Asche and Kash Kalkowski hit consecutive shots against North Dakota on March 18 last season.

After Spitsnogle sent the Gophers down in order for the second straight inning in the third, Christensen pushed NU's lead to 3-0 with his ninth home run of the season on a blast to the left-center-field berm.

With just one hit through the first three innings, the Gophers opened the top of the fourth with three straight singles and scored two runs. NU got the runs right back in the bottom of the frame with three hits of their own, including a leadoff double from Darby and a one-out double from fellow freshman Pat Kelly. The Huskers extended their lead to 6-2 in the fifth on three more hits, including an RBI single by Kiser.

Minnesota continued to chip away with a run in the sixth off three hits to cut NU's lead to 6-3. The Gophers had the tying run at the plate with runners on first and second, but King came in and retired Andy Heckemeyer to end the threat.

The Gophers had the tying run at the plate again in the seventh following a two-out double by Dan Olinger that put runners at second and third, but were once again unable to get a clutch hit as Vogt retired Kurt Schlangen for the third out of the inning.

Minnesota got after Vogt in the eighth with two runs on four hits and had the tying run at third base with two down and cleanup hitter Kyle Geason up. Geason pushed the count full, but Vogt dug deep and got the Gopher third baseman to pop out in foul territory to Richard Stock.

Head Coach Darin Erstad stayed with Vogt in the ninth and the junior retired Olinger to start the inning. Following a single by Schlangen into center field, Jake Bergen laid down a sacrifice bunt to put the tying run in scoring position at second base with two outs. Vogt sealed the sweep with the very next batter, as Michael Handel lined out to Christensen at short to end the game.

The Huskers play their final home game of the season on Tuesday night when the Wichita State Shockers visit Hawks Field. Scheduled for a 6:35 p.m.

Nebraska then hits the road for its final three games of the regular season when it pays a visit to Ann Arbor, Mich., to face the Michigan Wolverines for a three-game series starting Thursday.