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# Victories in Sydney

## USA baseball team wins big, defeats Cuba for Olympic gold

SYDNEY (AP) — It took a ragtag band of minor leaguers to bring down a dynasty and finally bring home the gold for America.

Led by Hall of Famer Tom Lasorda, a collection of draft picks and major-league misfits beat mighty Cuba 4-0 on Wednesday for the United States' first Olympic gold medal in baseball.

The team known as the Big Red Machine got only three hits off Ben Sheets, then had to stand and watch in disbelief while he and his teammates rolled in the dirt as part of their joyous celebration.

The long-awaited matchup of baseball archrivals was remarkably free of the dust-ups and disputes that have colored virtually all of the other games they have played through the years when Cuba won the only other baseball gold medals at the 1992 and 1996 Olympics.

Also unlike those other games, this time the United States won — and won convincingly.

"They come out and try to intimidate you," Everett said. "That's not our game. We don't come out and play that way. We just come out and beat you."

They found all sorts of dramatic ways to win: two walk-off homers and an eighth-inning grand slam. Their only loss was 6-1 to Cuba on Saturday, a game remembered for angry exchanges and cleared benches.

There were no dust-ups this time, no late-inning dramatics. Right from the start, it was no contest.

Mike Neill hit a first-inning homer as the Americans cranked it up early instead of late. Ernie Young — at the center of Saturday's bench-clearing inning — more than got even with a bases-loaded single.

Catcher Pat Borders, who was spiked at home in that first game, also had an RBI double as an exquisite payback.

Those hits put the upset on the

fingertips of Sheets, an unflappable right-hander who got 16 ground-ball outs in the first eight innings, setting up a pulsating ninth.

He got Cuba's first two hitters swinging — Luis Ulacia threw his helmet at the side of his dugout after going down for the second out.

When Neill made a sliding catch of Yasser Gomez's fly in left field for the final out, Sheets fell to his knees and raised his arm in celebration as players streamed toward him for a huddle on the mound.

**"They come out and try to intimidate you. That's not our game. ... We just come out and beat you."**

— Adam Everett  
Team USA shortstop

The Cubans sat in their dugout, knowing their dynasty was done.

The best team in international baseball had its 21-game winning streak snapped with a loss to the Netherlands during the tournament, then had its hold on the gold broken by its biggest rival.

The long-awaited matchup had the trappings of a seventh World Series game — and all the finality. Flashbulbs twinkled around the stadium as the U.S. team stood on the first base line and the Cubans assembled along the other one for pregame introductions.

Lasorda, who wanted to beat Cuba for the exiles in Florida, walked over and shook the hand of manager Servio Borges in front of the plate.

Moments later, the Americans spilled out of the dugout after Neill's tension-breaking homer in the first — his second big homer of the tournament. He also won the opener against Japan with a game-ending homer in the 13th. His two-out solo homer on Wednesday came off Pedro Luis Lazo, a closer who got a surprise start in the big game.

## U.S. wrestler pins down top medal

SYDNEY (AP) — Gardner did the unthinkable, proved Alexander Karelin is perfect — and won a gold medal virtually nobody in the world thought he could win.

Gardner, an American with a major title to his name, new world medalist, ended Karelin's string of three Olympic gold medals and the Russian's 13-year unbeaten streak by winning the Olympic heavyweight wrestling medal 1-0 on Wednesday.

"When did I think I could beat him? About 10 minutes ago," Gardner said. "I kept saying, 'I think I can. I think I can.' But it wasn't until it was over that I knew I could." Karelin is universally considered the greatest Greco-Roman wrestler of all time, a man who has never lost in international competition, who had not conceded a point in 10 years.

And Gardner beat him, stunning a crowd that included president Juan Antonio Santesteban, who had come to present Karelin his fourth gold medal — a medal he will never get.

"What does this mean? He's the best wrestler in the history of wrestling — a wrestler who has never been beat," U.S. national coach Steve Fraser said.

The upset was so stunning that virtually no one in the crowd at Sydney Exhibition Hall, outside Gardner's immediate family, could believe it. Nor could Karelin, Gardner said, "Mumbled a few words at me in Russian toward the end. I don't know what he said."

"He's so big and nasty, it's like a horse pushing you," Gardner said. "I'm not as strong as him, even close. I knew if I let him push me around, get even two or three points on me, it was over."

But Gardner, a former University of Nebraska wrestler, walked onto the football field to quit to wrestle full-time, said in forehand he had a strategy, counter Karelin's dreaded lifts and relentless pressure. He even expected to "have some fun with him."

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