Dylan Crews Makes Highly Anticipated Debut for Nats

Aaron Judge notches 1,000th career hit in Yankees win

By Kevin Dauray

WASHINGTON, DC-Dylan Crews won the College World Series as a member of the LSU Tigers. He and his teammate, pitcher Paul Skenes, were taken at no. 1 and no. 2 in last year's MLB draft. While Skenes was taken by Pittsburgh and has become an immediate sensation this summer, Crews' road to the majors has been different. It began with a hamstring injury in April. But two months ago, he was promoted to Triple-A Rochester. In Double-A and Triple-A, he had a combined 608 plate appearances with 534 at-bats.

According to reports in The Washington Post, the Nats (59-72) are liking what they've seen. Calling up the outfielder, the team's no. 3 prospect, also gives Washington some depth. Alex Call went down with an injury in Atlanta Friday related to plantar fasciitis. There is no word on his return, or even if he will return this season.

With the New York Yankees (77-54) visiting Nats Park for a three-game series, fans have a chance to welcome back Juan Soto, the player that GM Mike Rizzo wanted to build a team around but ultimately traded. Now in the Big Apple, Soto has formed a dynamic duo with Aaron Judge. Soto leads the American League in walks at 109 with an OPS of 1.027. Judge is first in a number of offensive statistical categories including home runs and RBI.

With Soto acting as protection for Judge, the Yankees have been neck and neck all season with Baltimore for first place in the AL East. New York sits in first now, but only by two games. At the end of the season, Soto will command top dollar as a free agent. The Yankees are one of probably four teams that will be able to afford his price tag. It seems they have no other choice, given what this one-year deal has demonstrated.

Crews, a center fielder in college, began his major league career in right, in place of the injured Call. On Manager Dave Martinez's lineup card, he was second in the batting order. The right-handed hitter stepped up to the plate to a thunderous ovation. Facing righty Nestor Cortez, he saw two fastballs. The first was called a ball, and he flied out to right on the next.

Speaking about his decision to place Crews between CJ Abrams and James Wood, Martinez shared his excitement. "I really believe that this is another piece to the puzzle and to our future," he said. "So I'm excited for the kid and his family. We're all excited, Nats fans should be excited. But he's one of 26. That's what I told him today. 'Go out there and play. Have fun'."

Nats starter Mitchell Parker faced every New York hitter in the first two innings. Though he surrendered a lead-off home run to Gleyber Torres that gave the Yankees an immediate lead, he was able to work out of a few jams and erase a runner awarded first because of his error.

In the second inning, Keibert Ruiz hit a pitch deep to left. With no outs and Andres Chaparro on second, it looked like the Nats had a chance to move the runner up but failed to take advantage of the

situation. With two outs, Jose Tena hit a ball deep to center, where Judge was waiting. He simply put his glove up and caught the ball, ending a big chance for the Nats.

In the top of the fourth, the Yankees added to their lead when DJ LeMahieu hit a sac fly with Anthony Volpe on third. The tag at the plate, from a throw by Crews, looked close, but he was called safe. Following that play, Alex Verdugo singled to left. Not yet out of the inning, Parker had reached 80 pitches.

Leading off the bottom of the fourth, Crews worked a walk, giving Washington only their second base runner of the night. He was out on a fielder's choice at second after James Wood hit a grounder to third. Standing on first, Wood watched Chaparro hit a fly to deep center. Judge struck again, robbing him of a round-tripper. Judge's bat also made an appearance: he earned career hit no. 1,000.

Tanner Rainey took the mound for the Nats in the fifth, serving up just four pitches to Soto, Judge, and Giancarlo Stanton, and getting three outs. Parker, though he kept the score manageable, had runners on base every inning. This and his high pitch count led to an early exit.

The Yankees padded their lead in the sixth, scoring two more runs on four hits. Facing Rainey, Austin Wells hit a solo home run. New York also manufactured a run when Anthony Volpe singled and was awarded second on a throwing error by center fielder Jacob Young. He then stole third, LaMahieu hit a sac fly against Joe LaSorsa, sending Volpe home.

Also in the sixth, Yankee starter Cortez had his most challenging inning. He gave up hits to Ildimaro Vargas and Jacob Young. He walked Wood to load the bases. With two outs and a chance to tie, Chaparro struck out swinging.

A run finally came for the Nats in the seventh when Juan Yepez took Cortez deep on a 432-foot blast to left center. The Yankees took the run back on a Jazz Chisolm home run in the eighth. Young brought the score a bit closer at 5-2 with a 400-foot homer that flew in the same direction as his teammate's. The score wouldn't get any closer as the Yankees locked down the victory.