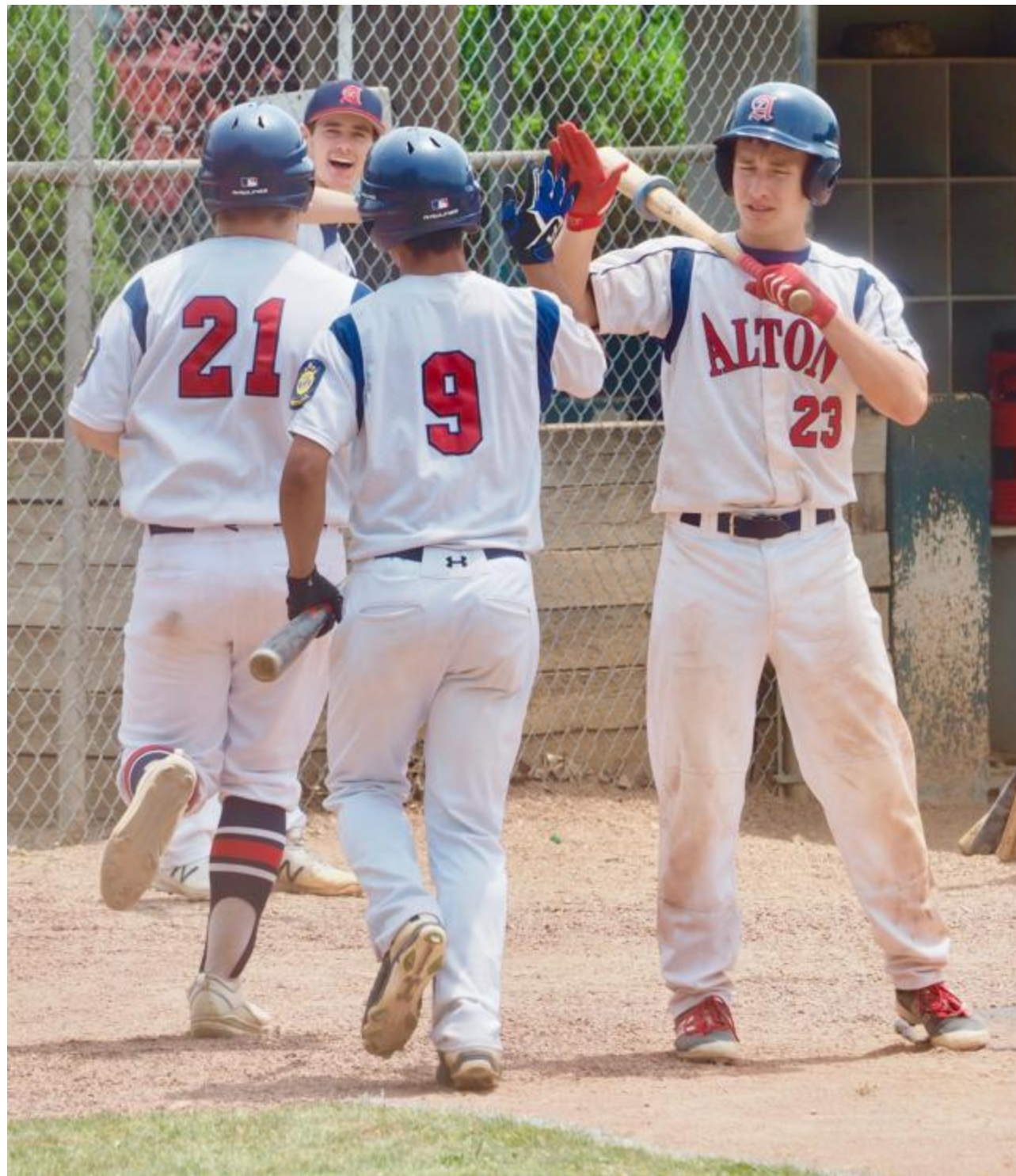
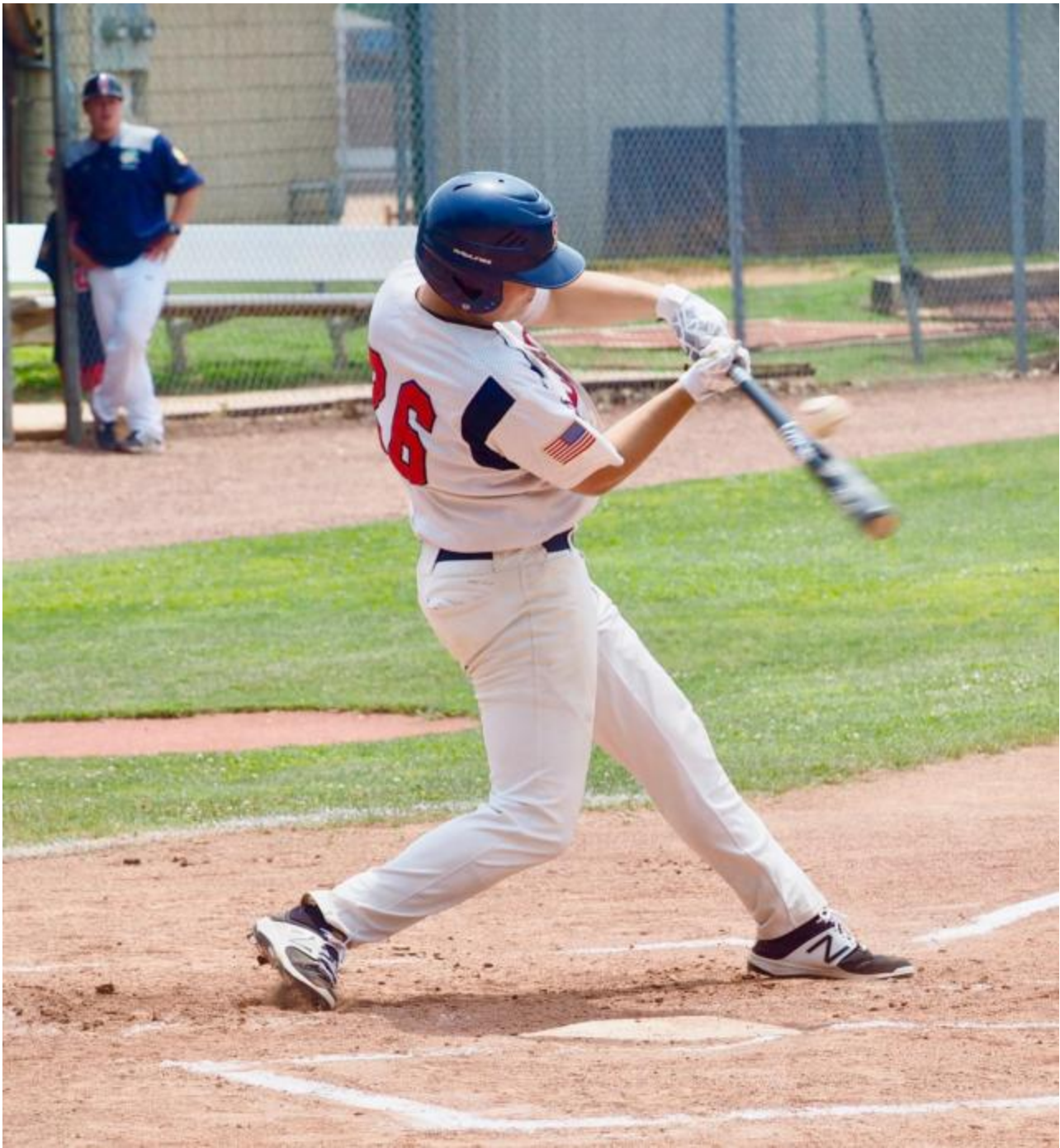


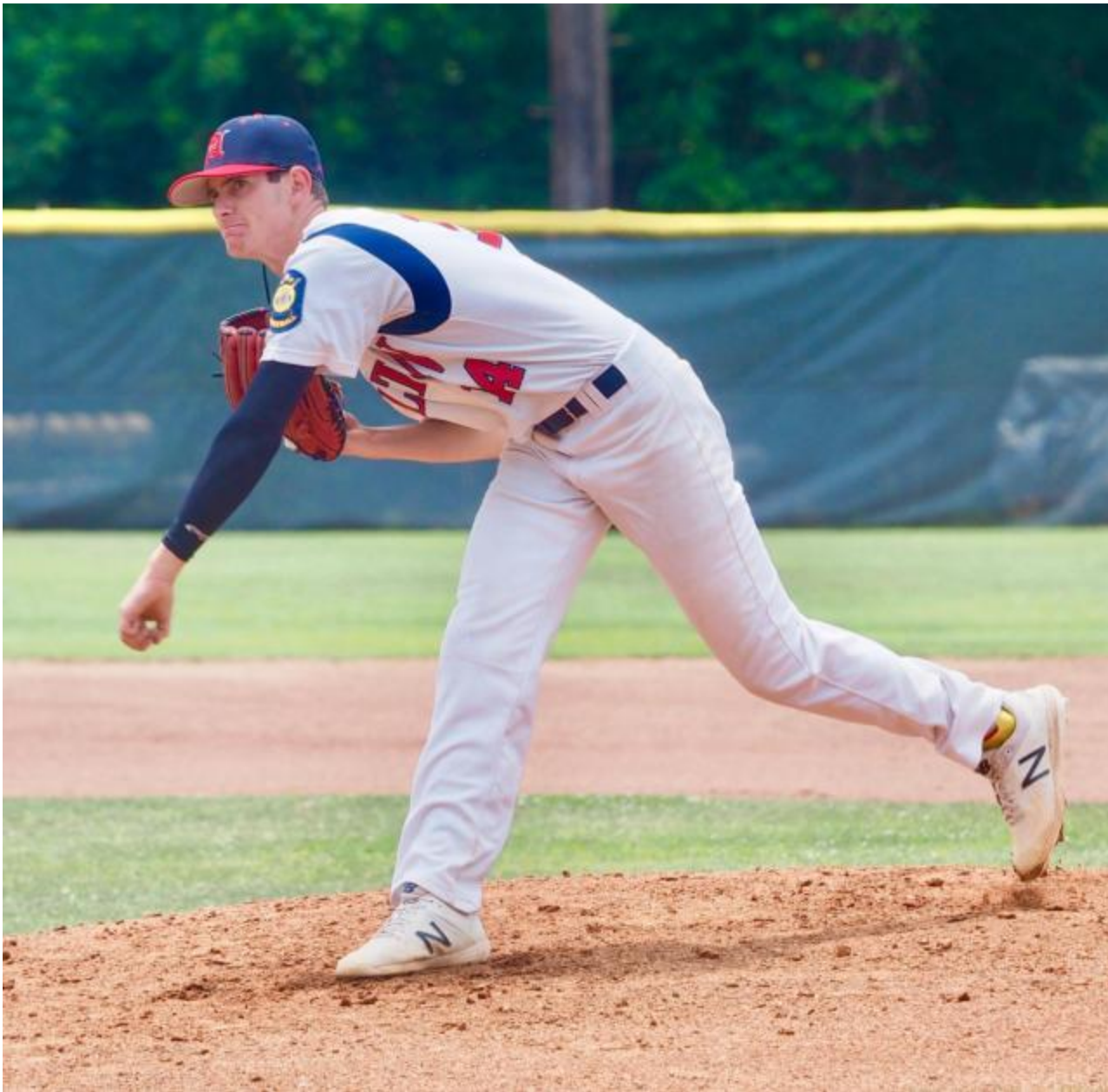


Alton Post 126 bag multiple victories on day one of Baseball Battles Cancer Tournament

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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BALLWIN - The Alton Post 126 baseball team kicked off the Baseball Battles Cancer Tournament with two victories on Friday at Ballwin Athletic Association.

In the first game, Wesley Laaker threw a complete game shutout leading Alton to a 7-0 victory over Thomas Booth Post 338. The junior-to-be Laaker was a workhorse for the Redbirds this past season as a sophomore. He led the team with 56.7 innings pitched and posted a 3.21 E.R.A.

“ was definitely Alton’s ace. [Based on his season workload} We gave him a quick break,” Post 126 coach Nick Paulda said. “He came out and did exactly what’s expected of him. He threw strikes. Got behind a couple of batters, but he fought back. He does a great job of pounding the zone. We have trust in every single pitch he has and so does he and that’s what makes every pitch important.”

Alton played Eureka Post 177 in the second game and defeated them 7-6. It was a back and forth contest where both teams traded runs until Zaide Wilson knocked in a two-run double in the sixth, which proved to be the deciding runs.

Alton High left-hander Michael Reeder threw four innings allowing two runs and five hits. He struck out two and walked one. He took a no-decision, and his record remains 1-0.

“Michael Reeder threw a great game today. He was pounding the zone and was working fast,” Paulda said. “We trust him to get a lot of groundball outs. We put a lot of pressure on our defense in that sense. They’re going to be putting the ball in play, and we’re going to be making the plays behind him.”

The bottom of the lineup provided a big spark with Wilson, Laaker, Simon Nyguen and Elijah Dennenbrink all at least getting on base and producing. Wilson went 3-for-3 with two RBI. Dennenbrink was 2-for-2 with an RBI hit-by-pitch while Nyguen finished 2-for-3 with an RBI as well.

“That’s what’s so key. They’re there because I trust them to get to the top of the lineup. They’re such great hitters,” Paulda said. “They’re willing to do anything to get on base and showed that. They battled at-bats. They got to full counts. They walked. That’s so key if we can get that leadoff guy back to the middle of the order. That’s what great teams do.”

Cullen McBride replaced Reeder in the fifth inning. He gave up seven hits and three runs while striking out three and walking one. He finished out the game throwing three innings and claimed the win.

The victories up Alton’s record to 5-1 in their first week of the summer. They take on Lemay (MO) today at 3 p.m. and have a semifinal birth on Sunday.

The Legion season just started, and Alton has a relatively young group, but thus far they’re playing just about as well as they could. For Paula, maybe even better than they thought.

“I think these kids are surprising themselves. As coaches, we know what they’re capable of doing, and we tell them every day it doesn’t matter how old they are. It doesn’t matter that know of them have any experience,” Paulda said. “All that matters is they come out here, and they fight like this game today. They fought against Festus on Tuesday. They just don’t quit, and that’s what’s going to make us hard to play against.”

