

Sixth-inning homer gives Belleville 3-2 Legion win over Alton

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Baseball games can sometimes come down to just one swing of the bat.

Such was the case in Monday night's American Legion Illinois District 22 league game between Belleville and Alton at SIU-Edwardsville's Roy Lee Field.

With Post 126 holding a 1-0 lead in the top of the sixth, Jack Ysursa stepped to the plate after Ben Steadman and Buddy Gore had reached base; Ysursa got ahold of a Bryce Parish delivery and sent it over the wall in left-center for a three-run homer, enough to give the Hilgards a 3-2 lead over Alton.

The loss dropped Alton to 9-6 overall on the year, 2-1 in District 22; the Hilgards went to 4-6 overall, 3-3 in the league.

"We came out and didn't play the way we normally play," said Alton manager Nick Paulda. "We hit way too many balls in the air tonight; we had way too many balls hit into the air tonight, easy pop-flies. I know there were at least five at-bats where we were ahead in the count and we just popped a fastball up in the infield.

"We told them that's not who we are; we hit doubles, we hit the ball on the ground and we beat it out; we've got a lot of speed on our team and we're not going to hit it over

their heads all the time – we need to use what we have and not try to be someone bigger.”

Parish threw a good game for Alton; at one point, he had retired 11 Hilgards in a row in the middle innings and struck out nine in going the distance. “He threw great; he threw exactly what we needed from him,” Paulda said. “He did make the one mistake that ended up deciding the game – he still threw a great game. If we can’t come out here and score more than three runs, we’re going to lose a lot of ball games.

“Anyone can win or lose on any day; we were on the losing part today. We have to flush it, have short-term memory; we can’t be hanging on it too long because we have Valmeyer tomorrow and Highland Wednesday. We’re going to come out ready and I have a feeling we’re going to have a good day tomorrow.”

“I thought the kids played well; we minimized our mistakes and got that one big hit,” said Hilgards manager Greg Eschman. “I actually tell the kids all the time to keep playing; baseball can be funny and funny things can happen. Jack got a fastball down the gut and he gave it a ride; he got all of it.

“Just that one at-bat did it for us; I was proud of my kids.”

Parish’s effort didn’t go unnoticed by Eschman. “He was awful good,” Eschman said. “I think he just got out of rhythm a little bit later in the game and that’s just what it takes, a little something like that and we were fortunate.”

Alton got on the board first in the bottom of the third when Adam Stilts led off the inning with a triple down the right-field line into the corner, allowing Stilts to get to third standing up; Jayce Maag then lifted a sacrifice fly to center to bring in Stilts and give Post 126 a 1-0 lead.

The way Parish was pitching, it seemed the lone run would stand up until Steadman got a one-out walk in the top of the sixth, with Gore following with a single to put runners at first and second; Max Schroeder then flew out to center to bring up Ysursa, who drove a Parish pitch to left-center for a three-run homer to put the Hilgards on top.

Post 126 had a chance in the bottom of the seventh when Maag delivered a two-out triple and Cullen McBride singled to put runners at the corners; Parish then singled in Maag to cut the deficit to 3-2, but Ethan Kopsie struck out to end the threat and the game.

Stilts was 1-for-4 with a run scored, Maag 2-for-2 with the triple, RBI and run scored, McBride 1-for-4, Parish 1-for-3 with an RBI and Zaide Wilson 1-for-3 on the evening.

Alton will host Valmeyer at 6 p.m. tonight at SIUE and travel to Highland for a 6 p.m. Wednesday game.



