

Burris, Mutz Have Two Hits Each, Needles K's 8, River Dragons Blank Hoots 6-0

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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ALTON - Boston Merila drove home two runs while starting pitcher Justin Needles struck out eight in five-and-two-thirds innings as the Alton River Dragons shut out the O'Fallon, Mo., Hoots 6-0 in a Prospect League baseball game played Saturday evening at Lloyd Hopkins Field at Gordon Moore Park.

Blake Burris of Edwardsville and Brady Mutz led the River Dragons with two hits and an RBI each, while Merila drove his two runs in with his only hit of the contest and Nick Neibauer, David Harris and Zach Carden each had a hit on the night.

The River Dragons earned a split of a home-and-home series with the win for the second consecutive time, having split a series this past Wednesday and Thursday against the Cape Catfish of Cape Girardeau, Mo. The River Dragons won at home Wednesday, only to lose to Cape at Capaha Field on Thursday night.

Alton jumped out to an early lead once again, scoring three times in the opening inning to go ahead, then added a single run in the fourth inning and two more in the seventh to created the 6-0 final, as three pitchers combined to shut out the Hoots.

Needles scattered three hits in his time on the mound, while walking only two and fanning the eight, Bryce Einstein threw for two-and-a-third innings, allowing only one hit while fanning two and Civic Memorial's Geoff Withers pitched the ninth, allowing only one hit and striking out one.

The River Dragons are now 20-24 and finish their week with a Sunday night game at Cape, with a 7:05 p.m. first pitch. After having their regular Monday off, Alton plays at home against the Normal CornBelters Tuesday in a 6:35 p.m. start, then plays a doubleheader against the Quincy Gems on Wednesday at Quincy University Stadium, with the first game being the completion of a suspended game from June, starting a 5 p. m., followed by the regularly scheduled game at 6:35 p.m. The River Dragons then host the Springfield Sliders Thursday at 6:35 p.m., play against the Hoots at home Friday night, also at 6:35 p.m., play at Quincy Saturday at 6:35 p.m., then play at O'Fallon Sunday night at 6:35 p.m.