

# **Alton Post 126 Senior Baseball Team Ties Game In Seventh, Scores Twice In Eighth To Eliminate Steeleville 8-6**

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July 24 2021 1:00 AM



CENTRALIA - The Alton Post 126 senior American Legion baseball team again showed its great resilience as the Legionnaires tied the game with a run in the top of the seventh, then scored twice on an error and wild pitch in the eighth to eliminate Steeleville 8-6 in the Fifth Division tournament in Centralia.

Alton will face Highland in the semifinal of the losers bracket on Saturday, with the winner going on to the opportunity to advance to Sunday's final and advance to the state tournament in Mattoon next week.

"We somehow found a way to pull it out," said Alton manager Doug Booten. "Another great win. The kids have still got their backs against the wall, and they keep responding. I'm really tickled to death for them."

The winning run in the eighth came about after Brady Salzman doubled to lead off the inning. Preston Schepers laid down a sacrifice bunt, but the throw to third got away, allowing Salzman to score what proved to be the winning run. After a base hit loaded the bases, Schepers provided the Legionnaires with some insurance after scoring on a wild pitch.

Alton's pitching helped the Legionnaires stay in the game, eventually leading to the game-winning rally.

"We had three great performances by our pitchers," Booten said. "Frank (Goss) started, was followed up by Ted (Webb), who kept us in the game, and our secret weapon, Nick Rayfield, came in and shut the door."

Both teams traded runs in the first inning, with Alton scoring single runs in both the second and third innings, then another singleton in the fifth to take a 4-1 lead. Steeleville rallied with three in the home half of the fifth to tie the game 4-4, then the Legionnaires scored another single run in the sixth to go back up 5-4. A two-run bottom of the sixth gave Steeleville the lead at 6-5 before Alton tied it up in the top of the seventh, then scored their two runs in the eighth to win 8-6 and eliminate Steeleville.

Schepers had two hits and drove home three runs in the game for Alton, while Caden Laslie had two hits and an RBI, Cameron Hailstone, Salzman, Blaine Lancaster and Rayfield all had two hits each and Preston Kaylor also had a hit for Alton.

Goss started on the mound for the Legionnaires, and went four-and-a-third innings, giving up three runs on three hits while walking four, Webb came in and threw for an inning-and-a-third, allowing three runs on two hits, walking two and striking out one, and Rayfield came in to pitch the final two-and-one-third innings, not allowing a run or hit while walking one.

Alton and Highland, who met in the opening round with Highland taking a 14-8 win, face each other again in the losers bracket semifinal Saturday at 4 p.m., with the winner facing the loser of the winners bracket final between Harrisburg and Centralia 30 minutes after the conclusion of the Alton-Highland game. The winner of that will go on

to the tournament final against the Harrisburg-Centralia winner Sunday at 11 a.m., with a second game being played 30 minutes after the end of the first game if necessary. Booten is looking ahead and ready for the weekend.

"We're looking forward to the weekend," Booten said. "We had to get to the weekend to give ourselves a chance, and we're here."