

Griffins' Three Home-Run Day Too Much For Alton's Baseball Team

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GLEN CARBON – After a 1-3 start to the season, the Father McGivney High School baseball team has gone 21 games now without a loss. After a three-home run day in a 13-10 win over the Alton High School Redbirds, the Griffins improve their record this season to 22-3 going undefeated in the month of April.

Alton struck first with a couple of runs in the opening frame, but that lead wouldn't last through the inning.

Jacob McKee hit an RBI single in the bottom half of the first to score a run and cut the deficit in half. Daniel Gierer stole home after a wild throw to first to tie things up. Nicholas Franklin had a two-RBI day, and they both came when he hit a two-run homer to take a 4-2 lead over the Redbirds.

Alton did show some adversity early on and battle back to regain the lead. Austin Rathgeb was hit by a pitch and immediately stole second to get into scoring position. Max Ontis' RBI single scored Rathgeb to make it 4-3.

Alton had runners on second and third with only one out. James Vambaketes singled scoring Aston Schepers to tie the game. After a wild throw back to second to check on the runner, Ontis stole home to take a 5-4 lead over Father McGivney, but once again it didn't last long.

The Griffins had a seven-run second inning to regain the lead at 11-5. That came after a couple two-run home runs. First from Gabe Smith and then again from Nathan Terhaar.

"Big day for our hitters," Father McGivney head coach Chris Erwin said postgame. "We saw the ball well; I think we let the ball get deep and really put some good swings on the bat. Obviously, with the wind blowing the way it is today, it's a hitter's day at the ballpark, that's for sure."

Wind gusts were up in the 20 mph range frequently Saturday afternoon. All you had to do was get under one and it had a chance of going over the fence.

The Redbirds were able to capitalize on the conditions when Rathgeb hit a solo shot to left-center in the top of the third to cut into the Griffin's lead and make it an 11-6 ballgame. After the third inning, Alton only trailed by three and felt if they were right there in the mix.

Father McGivney tacked on another run in the bottom of the third and then the first two zeros were put on the board in the fourth with neither team putting up any runs.

Alton was able to take advantage of a situation where Griffins pitcher Darren Luchetti walked the bases loaded with two outs. After hitting a batter and walking another, Alton scored a couple of runs without even having to swing the bat and only trailed 12-10 against one of the hottest teams in the state.

McGivney did try to slam the door shut with another run in the bottom of the fifth to get to the eventual final score of 13-10.

Ryker Keller came in to close out the game for the Griffins as he picked up the final seven outs. He tossed a couple of innings and picked up four strikeouts. The entire pitching unit for the game combined for 11 K's, but also nine walks. Starting pitcher Jackson Rodgers pitched three innings and received the win.

Alton had some trouble on the mound, having to go into their bullpen early. Starting pitcher, Schepers, only tossed an inning which brought in Scott Bartow. He allowed the two home runs, which he couldn't have done much about, and was pulled after just an inning's work. That brought in Caden Laslie who was able to dial things in and pitch the final five innings picking up six K's.

"He did a good job," Alton head coach Scott Harper said about Laslie. "He hasn't thrown a whole lot for us, he's a senior leader, a shortstop, so he's got a good arm."

"We started talking about putting him into the mix a little bit more with things since we've kind of struggled and today we needed it."

It was the sixth straight loss for the Redbirds, but they'll look to end that streak on Monday when they take on Gibault (11-13) at GCS Ballpark at 6 p.m.

As for the red hot Griffins, they'll be back in action when they play their final conference game at Maryville Cristian on Tuesday at 5 p.m. Father McGivney won the previous meeting back on April 26th by a score of 6-0.



