

Alton Grad Robby Taul Drives In Three Runs, Gallaher, Johnson Two Each As River Dragons Win Over CornBelters In First Of Two-Game Series 13-7

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ALTON - Former Alton High player Robby Taul drove in three runs, while teammates Ben Gallaher and Troy Johnson drove home two runs each as the Alton River Dragons scored four times in both the second and sixth innings en route to a 13-7 win over the Normal CornBelters in the first of a two-game Prospect League series Saturday evening at Lloyd Hopkins Field at Gordon Moore Park in Alton.



The River Dragons won for the third time in their last four games and are now 4-6 in the second half of the league's split season and 22-19 overall. The first half Prairie Land Division champions are currently in third, two games behind the division leading Springfield Lucky Horseshoes and a half-game out of second behind the O'Fallon, Mo., Hoots.

The CornBelters took an early lead in the first on a RBI single by John Stallcup to give Normal a 1-0 lead. Alton tied the game in the bottom of the second on a RBI double by Johnson that scored Gallaher, then went ahead on a RBI triple by Edwardsville's Blake Burris that scored Johnson and made the score 2-1 for Alton. A RBI double by Marcus Heusohn scored Burris and Kurtis Reid reached on an error that allowed Eddie King to score and make it 4-1 for the Dragons after two.

Alton extended its lead in the fifth when Alton's Mike Hampton stole third and scored on a subsequent error to make it 5-1, then Taul ripped a two-run single to center, scoring both Gallaher and Johnson to make it 7-1 for the Dragons. A RBI double by Stallcup cut the lead to 7-2 in the sixth, with the River Dragons scoring four more in the bottom of the inning. Gallaher doubled home a pair of runs to make it 9-2, then a RBI single by Chris Andrews and a sacrifice fly by Johnson plated two more runs to increase the lead to 11-2. Jackson Chatterto reached on an error in the seventh that allowed a run to score to cut the Alton lead to 11-3, then a sacrifice fly by Peyton Meredith and a RBI infield single by Stallcup put Normal to within 11-5. In the eighth, Joey Hagen reached on an error, allowing two runs to score to cut the Alton lead to 11-7 and give the CornBelters a chance, but in the bottom of the frame, Johnson reached on an error that scored a run for the Dragons, and a Taul sacrifice fly scored the final run as Alton won 13-7.

Johnson was the leading hitter for the River Dragons, having two hits and two RBIs, while Taul had a hit and drove home three runs, Gallaher had a hit and two RBIs, Burris, Heusohn and Andrews each had a hit and RBI and both King and Hampton each had a hit for Alton.

Justin Needles was the starting and winning pitcher for Alton, allowing two earned runs on eight hits while striking out three, while Blake Guerin fanned two and Kalen Reardon also pitched in the game.

The River Dragons and CornBelters complete their series Sunday evening at Lloyd Hopkins Field in a 5:35 p.m. start, then Alton hosts the Quincy Gems Monday evening in a 6:35 p.m. first pitch, then plays at the Cape Catfish in Cape Girardeau, Mo. Tuesday night at 6:35 p.m., hosts O'Fallon Wednesday night and returns to Cape on Friday night after a Thursday off-day, with all game starting at 6:35 p.m. Alton stays on the road for a two-game weekend set July 23-24 at the Burlington, Ia., Bees, the Saturday game starting at 6:30 p.m. and the Sunday game's first pitch at 2 p.m. Alton then plays at home July 25 against Quincy at 6:35 p.m., then plays at the Danville Dans July 26 at 6:30 p.m.