

Alton Post 126 Comes Up Short Against Red-Hot Aviston Express - Bow Out Of State Tournament

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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AVISTON – After dropping their opening game to Moline Post 247 by a score of 7-0, the Alton Post 126 Sr. Legion baseball team found themselves in a win-or-go-home situation. They had to beat the now 25-1 Aviston Express, a team they've played four times before this season and have yet to come up with a win.

That carried over into the second round of the state tournament when the Express short-gamed Alton by a score of 10-0 after five. Aviston also threw a combined no-hitter with six strikeouts along the way and only one walk.

“That’s a good ball club over there,” coach Doug Booten said. “You can’t take anything away from that.”

“We battled with them all summer; they’re obviously better than us and all you can do is tip your hat.”

Max Ontis started on the mound for Post 126 and threw the first 3 2/3 innings, picking up four strikeouts but allowing six runs. Seth Slayden came and finished out the game for the final 1/3 of an inning.

Booten said his team would “have to play perfectly” if they wanted to go far in this state tournament. He said they didn’t do so against Moline and then ran into a really good ball club in Aviston. He admitted that everyone in this tournament was a good ball club and had to earn their spot in the state tournament.

Regardless, Alton didn’t have any answers for Aviston yet again. The Express jumped on the board in the first inning with three runs and then another in the second. They led 4-0 after two innings.

Ontis did hold them scoreless in the third inning and it seemed like Alton had gained a little bit of momentum in the contest, but the Express slammed the door shut. Three more runs in each of the fourth and the fifth innings would secure them a 10-0 win through five innings.

Alton only had two base runners all night and they came after a walk and an error in the infield.

Booten and his team won’t use these things as an excuse, but it should be mentioned that this game didn’t start until 10 p.m. and was played on a sopping wet field.

After some more rain came through the area yesterday, the hosts Aviston had no choice but to postpone the games. The umpires stuck around, and they eventually started the second game of the day at 7:28 p.m.

Alton’s game started just before 10 p.m. and ended around 11:30 p.m. Surprisingly, there were still plenty of fans still in attendance. It was rumored that the tournament brought in 1,600 people yesterday. For clarification, Aviston’s sign at the front of the town lists a population of just 2,000.

So, Alton also had to deal with that. The Express used their talent and the energy from their enormous home crowd to beat Alton for the fifth time this season. They move on to the semifinals where they'll take on Moline in what should be an instant classic.

As for Alton, their season is now over, and they end it with a record of 20-14.

“I’m proud of our kids,” Booten said. “A 20-win season and earned our way to the state tournament. They’re just a good group of kids.”

The daytime photos below were taken during the game against Moline. The photos at night are from the game against Aviston.