

River Dragons Drop Game One Of Prospect League Championship In Final Home Appearance

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON - After a wild Western Conference Championship game on Tuesday night, one that featured a walk-off grand slam, the Alton River Dragons earned their way into a best-of-three Prospect League Championship series.

They would be taking on the Eastern Conference Champions, the Chillicothe Paints (38-22). Game one was last night at Lloyd Hopkins Field in front of another packed crowd.

The Paints got on the board in their first at-bat. Santrel Farmer doubled to get the inning going and then Tim Orr came up and hit a two-run bomb. Chillicothe earned a quick 2-0 lead after that. It was Orr's only hit of the night.

It was also the only big mistake that Alton's starting pitcher Kalen Reardon made. He tossed seven innings allowing six hits and grabbing a couple of strikeouts. After the homer, he threw six scoreless innings before being taken out of the game.

Unfortunately for the Dragons, Chillicothe's pitchers showed up to do some work as well. Gunnar Boehm threw eight innings, the first five of which were scoreless. He struck out four but allowed nine hits.

It wasn't until the bottom of the sixth that Alton would grab a run. Blake Burris got on with a single then immediately stole second. Eddie King Jr singled scoring Burris to cut the lead in half.

In the bottom of the seventh Alton threw a couple of hits together to get runners on first and second with two outs. Ethan Kleinheider put a ball in play and had to hustle to first base, diving in head first he was called safe. It was more importantly good for an RBI which tied the game up at 2-2.

The Paints regained the lead though the very next inning. They strung some more hits together to get the bases loaded with just one out. This all happened in Brady Salzman's first inning of work on the mound. He was pulled once the bases were loaded and in came Alex Redman.

He picked up two strikeouts for Alton, but only after allowing a hit to make it a 5-2 ball game.

So, just like in their last game, the River Dragons were down by three runs heading into the bottom of the ninth. The hero of that game, hitting the walk-off grand slam, was Erik Broekemeier. He led off the bottom of the ninth.

He hit a solo shot to bring the Dragons a little closer and make it 5-3. It was his second hit of the night and gave Alton a glimmer of hope once again.

Right after that Chillicothe brought in a new pitcher, a right-handed side-arm thrower, Cal McAninch, to close out the game. That's exactly what he did striking out his first two batters before ending the game after a fly out to center field.

With that, the Paints took game one by a score of 5-3 and take a one-game series lead back home to Ohio.

Games two and three will be played in Chillicothe this weekend as the Prospect League season nears its end.

Game two will be tomorrow, Saturday, August 13 with first pitch scheduled for 6:05 p.m. Game three, if necessary, will be on Sunday at 5:05 p.m.