

Alton takes doubleheader over Civic Memorial with excellent pitching

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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Bryan Hudson may get the biggest part of the attention, but the rest of Alton's baseball pitching staff is also impressive.

“We've got a lot of talent here,” said Redbird coach Todd Haug after seeing his team sweep a Saturday afternoon doubleheader over Civic Memorial at Lloyd Hopkins Field. The Redbirds, behind a no-hitter from Hudson, took the first game 10-0 in six innings, then used five pitchers that kept baffling the Eagles as AHS won the nightcap 5-0.

“The credit has to go to our pitchers and catchers and our pitching coach (Pete Kleeman),” Haug said. “They all work well together and are really effective.”

That Hudson is getting most of the attention is understandable. Coming off a five-inning perfect game he combined with Nick Cauley to throw Monday night, Hudson gave up just a first-inning walk to Caleb Buhs and retired the last 16 batters he faced in a row while striking out 14 and tossing a no-hitter in the opener.

In addition, Hudson showed how handy with the bat he is, hitting a three-run homer in the third and adding a solo shot in the sixth.

“That was a great effort on his part,” Haug said. “Considering all the pressure he's been under and all the attention of the scouts he's had, he's done really well.”

“They all throw well,” said Eagle coach Gary Bruening. “They're good up and down the lineup. I mean, they struck out something like 29 guys in the two games.

“We were leaving some extra men on base as well, and when you do that, eventually you're going to get burned. You can't give up runs like that.”

To say the least, Hudson was dominating in the opener. His pitching continually handcuffed Eagle batters with a variety of pitches, including curveballs that kept dropping off the table at key points in the count.

It took a bit for the Redbirds to get some runs across, though, finally breaking through in the third when, following a Drake Hampton single and a Matt Hopkins walk, Hudson took Jack Walker's first pitch of the at-bat and deposited it over the right-field fence near the Spencer Olin golf course for a 3-0 lead through three.

Two more runs came home in the fourth when Steven Nguyen singled to left-center to bring home Brandon Phillips and Derrick Allen, and another two runs crossed the plate when Nguyen knocked a single to score Aaron Bunnell and Phillips in the fifth.

Hudson led off the sixth with a solo homer he golfed into a nearby fairway at the golf course to make it 8-0, then Jacob Kanallakan scored on a RBI single by Allen and a wild pitch brought home Bunnell with the game-ending run.

The nightcap began somewhat ominously for the Redbirds when Carter Hayden, after retiring the first batter he faced, complained of elbow soreness after getting the count to 1-1 the Eagles' Brandon Hampton. Haug decided to take Hayden out of the game as a precaution and replaced him with Jacob St. Peters.

“Carter's elbow was a bit tender, so we decided not to take chances and shut him down,” Haug said.

Right then, Hampton and Buhs singled to put two men on, but St. Peters got Devin Daniels to fly to right and struck out Lukas Jones to end the threat. It took a bit for Alton to respond, but respond they did in the third, when Phillips led off with a single and, with two out, Nguyen drew a walk off Eagle pitcher Zach Cato and Drake Hampton singled both of them home.

Matt Hopkins then singled home Nguyen and Hudson, who was the designated hitter for the second game, was intentionally walked to put runners at first and second. Kanallakan then stroked a single to bring home Hopkins to make it 4-0 in Alton's favor through three innings.

In the fifth, Drake Hampton knocked a double to left-center and, with two out, Hudson came up and doubled home Hampton for the final run of the day for Alton. Cauley and Sam Ballard teamed up to keep the Eagles off the board the rest of the way.

The Redbirds have a busy week ahead of them; they'll travel to Belleville East for their first Southwestern Conference game of the year Tuesday, then host Wheaton-Warrenville South Wednesday and take on Edwardsville at home Thursday in an early SWC showdown. Game times are all at 4:30 p.m.

CM will travel to Piasa Southwestern in a rescheduled game Tuesday, then host Breese Mater Dei Wednesday and Freeburg Thursday at the Bethalto Sports Complex. Game times are all set for 4:15 p.m.

