



Siatos Pitches Well, Striking Out Three, Alton Takes Lead, Collinsville Counters As Kahoks Nip Redbirds 2-1

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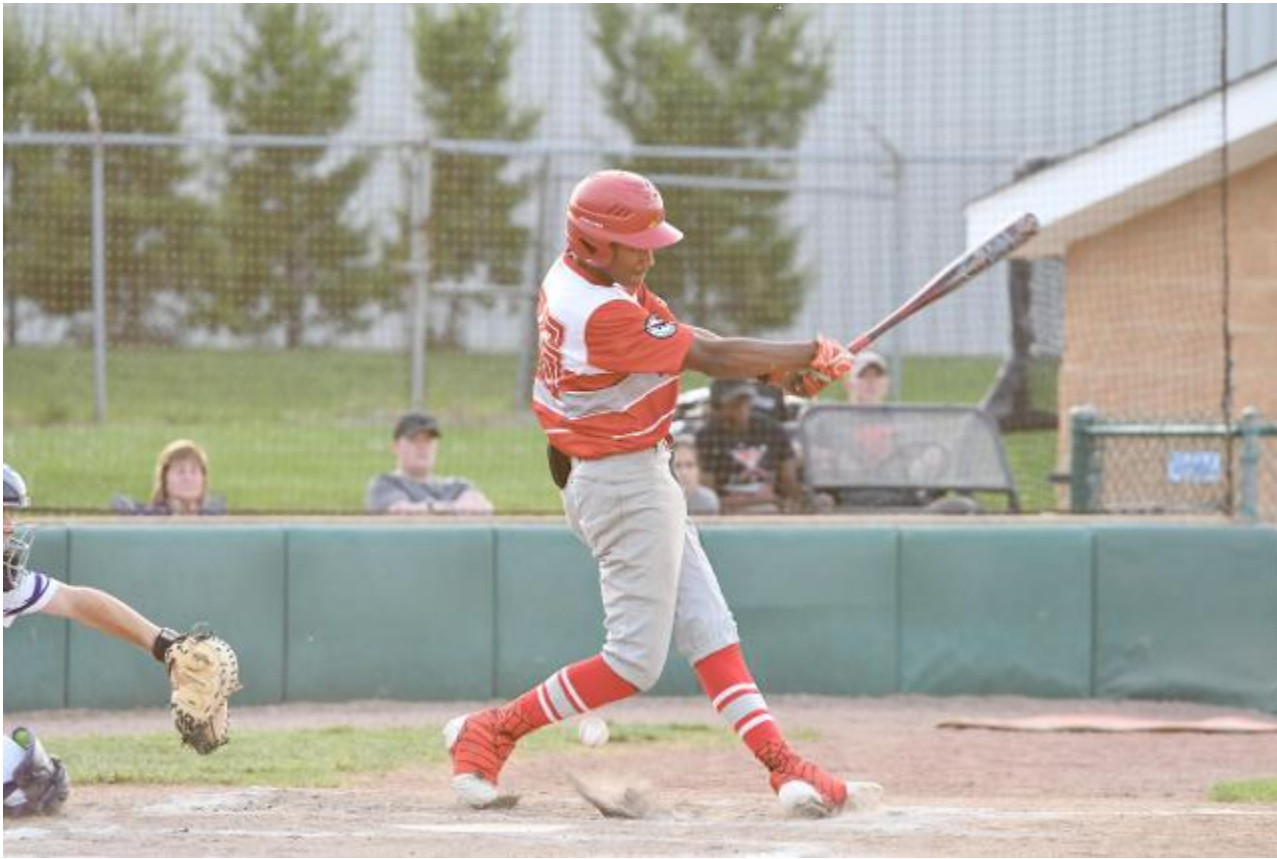
EDWARDSVILLE - Alton junior pitcher Alex Siatos threw a complete game on the mound, striking out three, and Jayden Diaz had the only hit and RBI for the Redbirds as Collinsville countered a third inning Alton run with two in the home half to give the Kahoks a 2-1 win in the second semifinal of the IHSA Class 4A baseball regional Wednesday evening at Tom Pile Field in Edwardsville.

It was a very well-played game by both teams, but Collinsville was able to take the lead in the third and held on to it the rest of the way to eliminate the Redbirds.

"I'm alright," said Alton head coach Scott Harper. "A little sad to see the end, of course. We've got a good senior class and I'm going to miss those guys, so that part's always bittersweet. The game itself, we knew it was going to be a great-pitched ball game, both of us throwing our best guys out there. Tip your cap to them; (Bryce) Lemp and (Ethan) Bagwell both threw great for them, limited us. We couldn't get enough going, we got our big hit and got on the board. They did a good job in just answering right back to get the two-spot. We had a chance to get that second run in and it's just the way it goes. But great baseball game."

"You know, any win in the postseason's a good win," said Kahok head coach Brett Swip. "Any win in the postseason is a good win, so we'll take it. A little slow start, their pitcher (Alex Siatos), it's been tough to get runs off him. He's pitched against us twice

this year and we've had a little difficult time getting runs off him. But we just kept fighting, we got a couple of big hits at the end that were important and we started getting more barrels on the ball, hitting the ball a little harder. So he's the kind of pitcher that can nitpick the corners, so you've got to be real patient with him and the guys did a good job."



The Redbird seniors - Matt Croxford, Jayden Diaz, Jay Lawrence, Quillan Taylor and Miles Windmiller - all played well throughout the season, with different players stepping up at various times during the campaign to contribute.

"Well, we had different guys step up," Harper said. "but you know, like any team, to have some success, you're going to have different guys at different times. Obviously, our senior group, Jayden Diaz, kind of our heart and soul back behind the plate, so we're really going to miss him and his leadership. But all our seniors, Quillan Taylor did a good job of really stepping up in left over the last third of the season and really playing well for us. Unfortunately, Miles Windmiller had a shoulder injury, because he was really coming on strong, so we lost him the last third of the season. And then, some unsung heroes, our seniors, Jay Lawrence and Matt Croxford, just playing some roles for us and really helping out with limited playing time, but just being great teammates."

Although the season didn't end the way the Redbirds wanted it, the team has absolutely nothing to be ashamed of and plenty to look ahead to for 2024.

"Only the state champion and third place winner get to finish with a win," Harper said, "so everybody else in the state loses on their last game. So, unfortunately, that's just the way it goes. A lot to build on."

Both Siatos and Lemp, the starting pitchers, retired the first six batters in order each in the opening two innings, with the Redbirds going up in the third. With two out, Austin Rathgeb drew a walk to become the game's first baserunner, scoring on Diaz's RBI double, the only hit of the game for Alton. Diaz went to third on an error, but was stranded when Siatos fouled out to the catcher. In the home half, Kris Alcorn led off with a single, going to second on an errant pick-off attempt and scored on a Luke Weller RBI double to tie the game at 1-1. One out later, Carter Harrington singled home Weller with the go-ahead run, but was thrown out at second to end the inning, but the Kahoks holding a 2-1 lead.

Lemp retired six of the next seven batters, throwing well and striking out a total of eight batters. Collinsville had a chance to extend its lead in the fifth when Alcorn led off with a single and went to second on an error, but was thrown out trying to score on a Blaine Martinez hit as the third baseman made an excellent relay throw to cut down Alcorn, keeping the score 2-1.

Siatos pitched equally as well, striking out three and getting excellent defensive support also. But Collinsville pitching set down the last 10 men in a row, with Bagwell coming on in the sixth and fanning four batters, striking out the side in the seventh to earn the save and give the Kahoks the 2-1 win.

The Redbirds end their season at 10-23, while Collinsville is now 16-14 and moves on to Saturday's final against the host Tigers, a 6-4 winner over Quincy in the first semifinal, with the game set to start at 10 a.m. The winner moves on to the Illinois Wesleyan sectional in Bloomington, where they'll face the Belleville East regional

winner, either O'Fallon, Belleville West or the host Lancers, in a semifinal game May 31 at a site to be announced. The sectional final is set for June 3 at 11 a.m.

