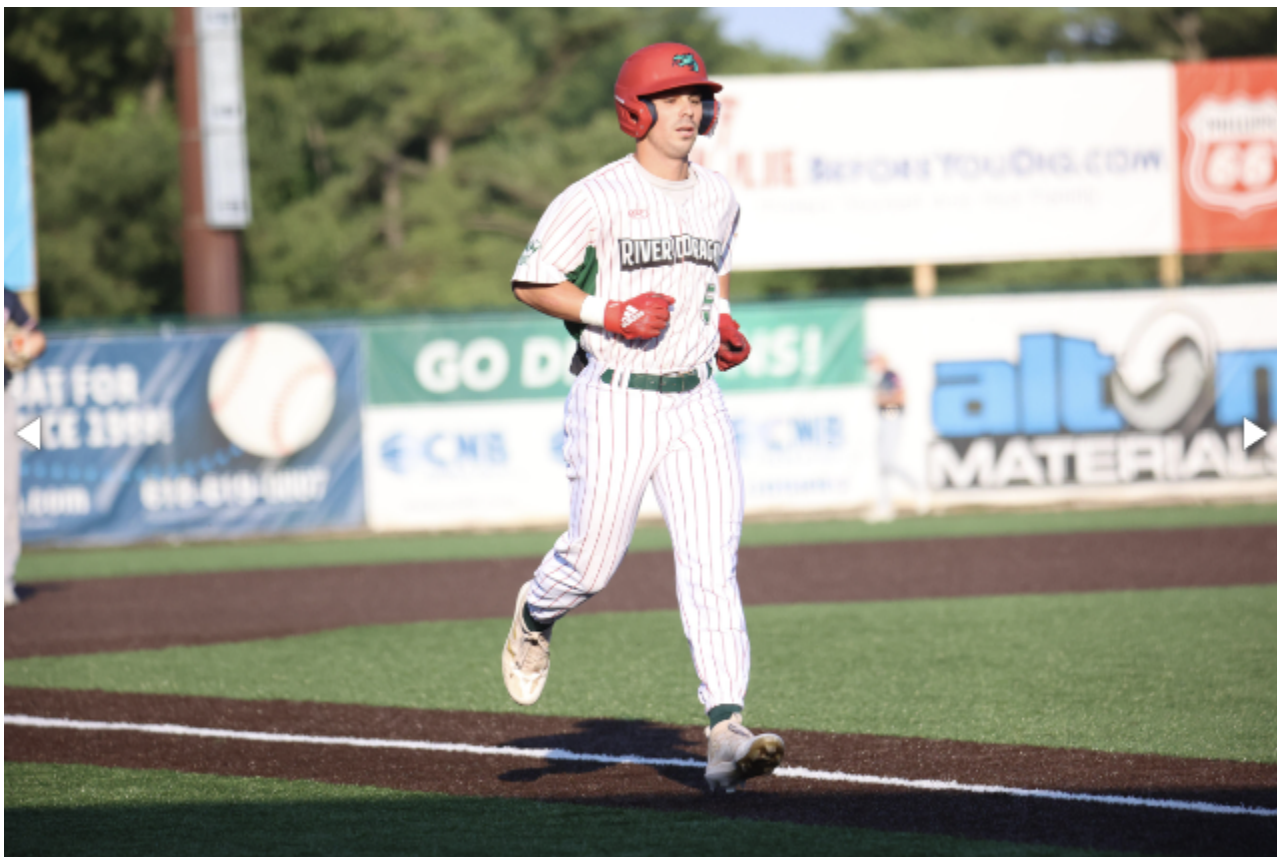


River Dragons End First Half Of Prospect League Season With Extra Inning Loss To O'Fallon, Loss At Cape, Start Second Half On Monday

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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ALTON - After being rained out at Quincy against the Gems on June 28, the Alton River Dragons ended the first half of the Prospect League split season with a pair of losses, falling at home to the O'Fallon, Mo., Hoots 6-4 in 10 innings on June 29. then

losing at the first half Prairie Land Division champions Cape Catfish of Cape Girardeau, Mo., also at Lloyd Hopkins Field at Gordon Moore Park.

Alton finished the first half of the season in fifth place in the division at 9-18, with the Catfish winning the division with a record of 22-6, the Hoots were second at 15-12, the expansion Thrillville Thrillbillies of Marion came in third at 12-13 and the league's other expansion team, the Jackson, Tenn., Rockabillys came in fourth at 11-18.

In the game on Thursday night, O'Fallon took the lead in the top of the first on a RBI ground out to third by Ethan Rossow gave the Hoots a 1-0 lead, but the River Dragons took the lead in the home half on a two-run single by Tyler Imbach to give Alton a 2-1 lead. Jake O'Steen then grounded into a double play that scored Dominic Decker to increase the advantage to 3-1. The Hoots tied the game in the top of the third on a two-run single by Nick Harms to make it 3-3, with the Dragons retaking the lead when a RBI single by O'Steen drove in Decker to give Alton a 4-3 lead.

The game settled into a pitcher's dual until the top of the ninth, when O'Fallon tied the game on a Jack Meyer RBI single that scored Tyson Ludwig, but Braedon Stoakes was thrown out at third on the play, drawing the Hoots level at 4-4 to force extra innings. In the top of the 10th, Tucker Platt singled to left to give O'Fallon a 5-4 lead and Zach Beatty was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded to bring in an insurance run to give the Hoots their 6-4 win.

Decker led the River Dragons with three hits, while Imbach had two hits and two RBIs, O'Steen had a hit and RBI and Dylan Mass, R.J. LaRocco and Alex Hagen all had hits. Charlie Hodges got the start on the mound and went four innings, allowing three runs on five hits, walking two and striking out three, Colin Hawkins went three innings, allowing one hit while walking two and fanning three, Zach Olson pitched two innings, giving up two unearned runs on one hit, walking one and striking out two and Scott Detweiler pitched in the 10th inning and was tagged with the loss, allowing one run on one hit, walking two and striking out one.

In Saturday's first half finale against the Catfish, Erik Broekemeier of Metro-East Lutheran opened the scoring in the bottom of the first, as his RBI single scored Decker to put Alton ahead 1-0. Cape then scored five unanswered runs in both the third and fourth innings to pull ahead 5-1, tying the game on a solo homer by Kevin McCarthy, then Justin Carinci scored on a wild pitch to give the Catfish a 2-1 lead and Tucker Stockman's sacrifice fly to left scored Brody Chrisman to make it 3-1, but Dan Triplett was thrown out at second on the play. In the fourth, a Carinci sacrifice fly to left scored McCarthy and Triplett drew a bases-loaded walk to force home another run to make it 5-1.

In the bottom of the ninth, a bases-loaded walk to Tyler Martin forced home Civic Memorial's Bryer Arview and R.J. LaRocca reached on a fielder's choice, with Victor Heredia forced at third, but Jake O'Steen scoring to make it 5-3, but it would be as close as Alton would get as the Catfish took the win.

Decker led the way for the River Dragons with two hits, while Broekemeier had a hit and RBI, Cole Yearsley, Mass and Arview all had hits and both Martin and LaRocca had RBIs. Kyle Athmer started on the mound and was eventually charged with the loss, going two innings and allowing three runs on two hits, walking six and striking out two, with Dimitri Ivetic pitching 1.2 innings, allowing two runs on one hit, walking three and fanning two, Luke Gasser threw 1.1 innings, walking two and striking out three, Detweiler went two innings, fanning two, Tyson Greene pitched the eighth inning, also striking out two and Jackson Parrill of Collinsville pitched in the ninth, allowing two hits.

After having an off day on Sunday, the River Dragons open the second half of the season on Monday and Tuesday with a pair of games at the Illinois Valley Pistol Shrimp in Peru, with both games starting at 4:05 p.m., then Alton returns home on Wednesday and Thursday with a two-game series against the Springfield Lucky Horseshoes, both games starting at 6:35 p.m., then Alton plays a home-and-home series against the Danville Dans, the first game Friday night at Danville at 6:30 p.m., then play the return game at Lloyd Hopkins Field Saturday at 6:35 p.m. The first week of the second half concludes with a doubleheader at Quincy, with the start times being 5 and 7:30 p.m.