

Hoerner Drives In Four Runs, Evola Three, River Dragons Explode For 20-6 Road Win Over Thrillbillies

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
July 19 2023 8:04 AM



MARION - Eli Hoerner drove in four runs, while Evan Evola came up with three RBIs as the Alton River Dragons exploded for three runs in the eighth and nine in the ninth in going on to their biggest win of the year, 20-6 over the Thrillville Thrillbillies in a Prospect League baseball game Tuesday night at Marion Stadium.

The 20 runs represent the biggest outburst for the River Dragons this year, coming on 17 hits, and broke a six-game losing streak in going to 6-11 in the Prairie Land Division in the Western Conference, improving to 15-28 overall on the season, currently sitting in fourth place in the division's second half of the split season.

Thrillville scored first in the bottom of the first, thanks to a RBI single by Jackson Lindsey to go ahead 1-0, but Alton scored twice in the second to take the lead, as Civic Memorial's Bryer Arview singled home Evola to tie the game and Hoerner grounded out to third, driving in Bryce Zupan of CM to give Alton a 2-1 lead. Evola singled home two runs in the third to extend the lead, but in the home half of the third, a solo homer over the right field fence by Dylan Drumke halved the River Dragons' lead to 4-2.

A sixth inning single by Evola drove in Arview and Kaden Byrne reached on a fielder's choice on a bunt back to the pitcher, who couldn't make a play, allowing Tyson Greene to score and make it 6-2, Byrne being credited with a RBI. In the bottom of the frame, Andrew Schroeder reached first on an error by the first baseman, allowing Bryson Arnette to score and Schroeder picking up a RBI that make the score 6-3 for Alton.

The River Dragons responded with 12 unanswered runs in the final three innings, starting with a two-run single in the seventh by Evola and in the eighth, a sacrifice fly by Zupan and a two-run single by Greene made the score 11-4. Alton then went off on its nine-run ninth, starting with a RBI infield single by Evola and a RBI single by Alex Hagen to make it 13-4. Arview drew a bases loaded walk to force home Erik Broekemeier of Metro-East Lutheran, then a two-run single by Diego Murillo, followed by a two-run double by R.J. LaRocco brought the scored to 18-4. Aiden Joaquin singled home another run and Victor Heredia reached on a fielder's choice to third, going to second on an error by the second baseman, scoring LaRocco and giving Heredia a RBI to make it 20-4.

In the bottom of the ninth, a sacrifice fly to center by Kaleb Herbert and a RBI single by Arnette gave Alton its 20-6 win over the first-place Thrillbillies.

Hoerner led the way for the River Dragons with three hits and four RBIs, while Evola had three hits and three RBIs, Greene had two hits and drove home a pair of runs, Drake Westcott of Edwardsville had a pair of hits, Arview and LaRocco both came up with a hit and two RBIs, Heredia, Zupan, Hagen and Joaquin all had a hit and RBI each and Byrne also drove in a run.

Luigi Albano-Dito started on the mound and went four innings, allowing two runs on five hits while walking two and striking out six, Scott Detweiler was credited with the

win by going 4.2 innings, giving up four runs, three earned, on five hits, walking three and fanning one and Kyle Dixon pitched the final out of the ninth, getting the strikeout to end the game.

The River Dragons continue their road trip on Wednesday, starting a two-game series with the Cape Catfish of Cape Girardeau, Mo., playing a 2:05 p.m. game, and after an off-day on Thursday, play at Cape again Friday night at 6:35 p.m. The road trip concludes on Saturday with a game at the Danville Dans at 6:30 p.m., then Alton briefly returns home for a Sunday evening game against the Terre Haute, Ind., REX in a 5:35 p.m. start. The next week sees the River Dragons returning to Marion for another game against Thrillville July 24 at 6:45 p.m., then play at the Springfield Lucky Horseshoes July 25 at 6:35 p.m. Alton then hosts the O'Fallon, Mo., Hoots at 6:35 p.m., then ply a two-game set at the Burlington, Ia., Bees July 27-28, both games starting at 6:30 p.m., then hosts Danville July 29 at 6:35 p.m. and O'Fallon July 30 at 5:35 p.m.