

# Alton captures close game with Granite City 6-3

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
April 24 2015 5:00 AM



Alton's baseball team, in the view of their coach, Todd Haug, is starting to develop an identity.

Where it will go is anyone's guess, but a good sign of that identity may have come in the way the Redbirds bounced back from Granite City's top of the fourth in their Southwestern Conference tilt at Lloyd Hopkins Field at Gordon Moore Park Thursday afternoon.

Alton got key hits from Drake Hampton and Derrick Allen in the bottom of the fourth and took advantage of Warrior miscues as the Redbirds went on to take a 6-3 win.

“We're finding our identity,” Haug said. “It starts with gaining some confidence and getting some wins. We're not wanting to peak too early; we want to be playing our best baseball in three weeks (when the IHSA baseball playoffs get under way).”

It didn't hurt that Jacob Kanallakan had a perfect day at the plate; the junior first baseman went 4-for-4 at the plate with a double, two RBIs and a run scored.

“I've been struggling lately, but I felt good at the plate today,” Kanallakan said. “I've been swinging the bat well; I just went up, see the ball and got some hits today. We did pretty well today.”

That and the fact that Jacob St. Peters came in and had some good innings after starting pitcher Nick Cauley ran into trouble in the fourth when the Warriors scored three times to take the lead. “Jacob was phenomenal today,” Haug said. “It's hard to have to wait in the bullpen at times, but I talked with Jacob before the game and asked him if he could give us a couple of big innings and he said he could.”

Three Warrior errors helped the Redbird cause as well, and that's been a recurring theme for Granite this season. “It's been our story this year,” said GCHS coach Scott Smallie. “We make a couple of mistakes and someone gets a big hit and it costs us. Give Alton credit, they made the plays and we didn't.

“We're competing and we're playing hard, and that's good to see. We've got a lot of kids out there battling. We just need to eliminate some of the mistakes.”

Alton jumped out to a lead on Warrior pitcher Sam Watson, starting in the second when Hampton reached on a error got to third on a pair of wild pitches. After Jacob Skrabacz walked, Hampton scored on another error to give Alton a 1-0 lead.

In the third, Bryan Hudson reached on a single and went to quickly to second. The Warrior infield seemed to be gathered at second, leaving third open, and Hudson quickly noticed and took off for third, winning a footrace to the bag. Kanallakan then singled Hudson home and put the Redbirds up 2-0.

Granite finally got to Cauley in the fourth, with Bruce Drennan singling and Ryan Steen reaching on a walk before David Pulley and Gabe Jarman had back-to-back RBI doubles to put the Warriors up 3-2. Alton came right back and got a leadoff triple from Hampton and Allen chased him home with a one-out single to tie the game before Steven Nguyen reached on an error that allowed Allen to score and give the Redbirds the lead back.

Steven Patten, on a Noah Rathgeb RBI single in the fifth, and Kanallakan, on a double, stolen base and wild pitch, scored in the sixth ended the scoring and Hampton retired the side in order in the seventh.

The Redbirds went to 14-3 on the season in the win, 5-1 in the SWC; the Warriors fell to 6-13 overall, 1-5 in the league. Alton travels to Highland for a 4:30 p.m. Friday game, then hosts Piasa Southwestern in a 10 a.m. Saturday doubleheader.



