

Dragons Rally Late for Second Straight

If the first two games are any indication, DuPage Dragon fans are in for a treat this season. After rallying late to win in extra innings last night, the Dragons used another late rally Tuesday night to defeat the Dubois Bombers 4-3. The victory puts the Dragons above .500 on the season, with a record of 3-2. The Bombers fall to 1-3 on the year.

For the second straight night, the Dragons scored early, as they were able to plate a run in the first inning. Leadoff hitter Justin Wilson (Oakland) got a bunt single to start things off for DuPage. He quickly stole second base, and a grounder to the right side of the infield allowed him to move to third with only one out in the inning. Designated hitter Phil Wunderlich (Louisville), with the infield playing back, hit a ground ball to the shortstop, allowing Wilson to score without a play to give the Dragons a 1-0 lead.

The Dragons again found themselves in a pitchers duel, as DuPage starter Andrew Beatty (Southern Illinois-Edwardsville) locked horns with Dubois starter Justin Higdon. Beatty mowed them down early, striking out five bombers through the first three innings. Higdon was equally impressive, giving up only the one run through the fourth.

It was in the fourth that Dubois was able to take their first lead. With two outs in the inning, catcher Casey Hanrahan singled though the right side of the infield. He advanced to second when the next hitter was hit by a pitch. With runners now on first and second, the hot hitting Rich Gorman ripped a double down the leftfield line, scoring both runners and giving the Bombers a 2-1 lead.

The Dragons tied it up in the bottom of the fifth on a couple of hits. Left fielder Mark Noth (Belmont) led off the inning with a stand up double down the rightfield line. He advanced to third on a fielder's choice, giving the Dragons a runner on third with one out for the second time in the game. Unable to score on a groundout to the pitcher, Noth came across with two outs when shortstop Kevin Tokarski (Illinois State) ripped the first pitch he saw through the right side of the infield, tying the contest at 2-2.

The Bombers got the run back in the next half inning. After a runner reached base on an error, Hanrahan hit his third single of the game to give Dubois runners on first and second with only one out. A failed double steal attempt allowed the Dragons to get the second out in the inning after a rundown, but a 2-out single by Garrett Seagraves scored Hanrahan and gave the Bombers the lead again at 3-2.

Things looked bleak for the Dragons as the evening progressed. Higdon continued to roll, retiring six of the last seven hitters he faced. Corey Maines relieved him in the eighth, and it looked like the Dragons would continue to struggle. Despite leading off the inning with a walk to Kevin Tokarski, the Bombers looked to keep things in control as a lucky ricochet off the second baseman's ankle went straight to the shortstop, allowing Dubois to turn the double play and keep the Dragons' backs against the wall. However, that is when their luck would run out. Right fielder Jordan Tokarz (Eastern Illinois) was able to reach first on an error by the shortstop, and he was able to advance on an infield single by first baseman Dave Reynolds (Northern Illinois). On the play, the ball was able to bounce past the pitcher and forced the shortstop to attempt a barehanded grab & throw. Reynolds was able to beat it out, and that gave the Dragons runners on first and second with third basemen Nick Popescu (Bradley) coming to the plate. Popescu, last night's hitting hero in extra innings, hit another ball in the direction of the pitcher. Maines was able to field the ball cleanly, but rushed the throw and sent it sailing past the first baseman into foul territory. The error allowed both runners to score and gave the Dragons the lead at 4-3.

Dubois looked to tie the game in the ninth, but Dragons reliever Andrew Estes (Oakland), who came in to pitch in the seventh, retired the Bombers in order and wrapped up the victory for DuPage.

This marked the second game in a row that the Dragons were able to use late game heroics to earn a victory. Andrew Beatty had a great outing, but didn't factor in the decision. He went six innings, giving up three runs, two earned, while striking out five. Andrew Estes picked up the victory, retiring all nine hitters he faced, including three strikeouts in his three innings of work.

The Dragons wrap up this home stand Wednesday night, June 11th, when they take on the Dubois Bombers once more at 7:05 pm. Tickets start at \$6 with kids five and under admitted free. Group rates are available by calling the Dragons' ticket office at 630-241-2255.