

In Dragons End Skid, Sweep Sliders

The DuPage Dragons came into Saturday night's doubleheader losers of their previous four games. They ended that streak in grand fashion, sweeping a twin-bill over the first-place Springfield Sliders by scores of 3-1 and 3-2. The wins put the Dragons back above .500 on the season with a record of 18-16.

The Sliders got the scoring started early in game one, putting a run across in the top of the first. Ryan Mooney led off the inning with a double. After a flyout advanced him to third, a single by Vicente Cafaro scored him to give the Sliders the early 1-0 lead.

The Dragons answered back in the bottom of the inning. Shortstop and CIGL Co-Player of the Week Kevin Tokarski (Illinois State) drew a leadoff walk, and was advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt by leftfielder Mark Noth (Belmont). A groundout advanced him to third, and then a single by the other CIGL Co-Player of the Week, second baseman Jordan Tokarz (Eastern Illinois), brought him home to tie the game at one.

The two teams remained tied all the way into the sixth inning, as Sliders starter Logan Mahon and DuPage starter and CIGL all-star Brian Stroud were locked in a pitcher's duel. Stroud didn't allow a runner beyond second after the first inning, as he went six strong, giving up only the one run in the first while striking out four in his outing.

The Dragons would finally separate themselves in the bottom of the sixth. Catcher Justin Behm (Northern Illinois) led off the inning with a double to deep centerfield that put a runner in scoring position for DuPage. Designated hitter Scott Sexton (Oakland) dropped a perfect sacrifice bunt down the third base line to advance Behm, but an error on the throw allowed him to come across and give the Dragons the lead while letting Sexton advance to second. Rightfielder Pete Capetta (Illinois) hit a single to right that put runners on the corners, and then centerfielder Justin Wilson (Oakland) executed a perfect safety squeeze bunt to score Sexton and give the Dragons a 3-1 lead.

Andrew Estes (Oakland) came on to save the game in the seventh. After getting the first hitter to ground out, Estes would hit Dennis Vaughn with a pitch to bring the tying run to the plate. A fielder's choice got Vaughn at second but allowed Tyler Choate to reach base, and then a single by Jimmy Swift put runners on first and second with two outs. Estes was able to get Elliot Soto out on strikes and the Dragons ended their four-game skid.

Game two saw both teams put zeroes on the board for the first two innings. DuPage starter Nick Kurash (Miami-Ohio) actually faced the minimum through three, and in the bottom of the inning, the Dragons went to work. Second baseman Pete Capetta

was able to reach second on an error by the third baseman, and then advanced to third on a ground out. A single by designated hitter Scott Sexton scored Capetta, but the Dragons weren't done. Another single by shortstop Kevin Tokarski was followed up by a ground out that put runners on second and third with two outs. CICAL all-star catcher Matt Behren (Northern Illinois) drew a walk to load the bases, and then a misplayed fly ball off the bat of rightfielder Jordan Tokarz allowed two runs to score and the Dragons led 3-0.

The Sliders would answer back with two in the top of the fourth. Elliot Soto would start things off with Springfield's first hit of the night, a single up the middle. After stealing second, a balk would advance him to third. Ryan Ashe would draw a walk to put runners on the corners, and then a groundout by Vicente Cafaro would score Soto. A single by Andrew Quinnette would score Ashe from second and end the night for Kurash. CICAL all-star Brad Riegler would come in to relieve him, and after giving up a walk, struck out the next two hitters to end the threat.

Neither team would score the rest of the way, as Riegler was lights out in relief. He retired all nine hitters he would face over the next three innings to pick up the win for DuPage and give the Dragons the doubleheader sweep. Riegler pitched three and two-thirds innings, striking out six without giving up a hit.

The DuPage Dragons are now off for the all-star break. Their next game is scheduled for Tuesday, July 22nd, against the Springfield Sliders at the Lisle Sports Complex at Benedictine University. First pitch is scheduled for 7:05 pm, and tickets start at \$6 with children five and under admitted free. Group rates are available by calling the Dragons' ticket office at 630-241-2255.