

Dragons Drop Bombers Behind Another Eighth Inning Rally

After providing plenty of fireworks a night earlier, the DuPage Dragons looked to start their first winning streak in almost a month. They did so Friday night, and with another eighth inning rally, the Dragons defeated the Dubois Bombers by a score of 6-3. The win guaranteed the Dragons would return home with a record above .500 after their four-game road trip comes to an end tomorrow night. Their record sits at 12-10, while the Bombers fell to 7-17.

On Thursday night, the Dragons dominated the game in handing the Bombers a 10-2 defeat. But on Friday night, both teams were evenly matched through seven innings, as the score was tied at three. Both teams put runs across in the third and fifth innings. The Dragons got things started in the top of the third. Second baseman Kevin Tokarski (Illinois State) hit the second of back-to-back singles and reached second on an error. However, first baseman Phil Wunderlich (Louisville), the leadoff hitter in the inning, was thrown out at third on the play. After a wild pitch allowed Tokarski to advance to third, centerfielder Justin Wilson (Oakland) drew a one-out walk. Leftfielder Mark Noth (Belmont) would ground out to second base, moving Wilson to second and scoring Tokarski. Designated hitter Ryan Duffy (Mississippi State) smacked a double that scored Wilson and gave the Dragons a 2-0 lead.

The Bombers got both runs back in the bottom of the inning. Corey Maines drew a leadoff walk, and advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt. He was brought around to score on a double by Wes Fink. A groundout advanced Fink to third, and an Eddie Cassidy single scored him and tied the game at two.

DuPage would rally again in the fifth. Noth and Duffy drew back-to-back walks to start the inning. Shortstop Jordan Tokarz (Eastern Illinois) singled and the Dragons had bases loaded with no outs in the inning. But despite the great situation, they would only plate one run in the inning. A drawn-in infield worked well for the Bombers when a ground ball to second was fielded cleanly and the throw home caught Noth on a force play for the first out in the inning. Wunderlich hit a sacrifice fly to rightfield that scored Duffy and a ground out to first ended the inning with the Dragons leading 3-2.

The lead was short lived though, as the Bombers again struck back in the bottom of the inning. With two outs, Jared Baehl ripped a double, and a single by Cassidy brought him around to score. That would end the night for Dragons starter Ryan Copeland (Illinois State). Brad Riegler (Illinois-Chicago) came on in relief and got the last out in the inning. After five complete, the score was deadlocked at three.

The Dragons were finally able to pull away in the eighth inning. Many times at home, the Dragons have used the eighth as their rally inning to comeback and either win games or send them into extra innings. But on this night, for the first time on the road, the Dragons were able to use the inning to pull away. Wunderlich was hit by a pitch to start things off. A sacrifice bunt by rightfielder Pete Capetta (Illinois) moved him to second, and first baseman Dave Reynolds (Northern Illinois) smacked a double to score Wunderlich and give the Dragons the lead. But they weren't done yet. After a wild pitch advanced Reynolds to third, Kevin Tokarski drew a walk to put runners on the corners. After a pitching change, Tokarski stole second to put both runners in scoring position. A strike out gave the Dragons two outs in the inning, but the Dragons did a surprise double steal. Tokarski stole third, while Reynolds stole home for the second run of the inning. Noth knocked a single to score Tokarski and the Dragons ended the inning with a 6-3 lead.

Brad Riegler was magnificent in relief. He went three and 1/3 innings, allowing only two hits while striking out three to pick up the win. Andrew Estes came on in the ninth to close the door for the second straight night. He retired all three batters he faced, striking out one for his first save of the summer.

The DuPage Dragons return home Monday night, July 7th, when they take on the Quincy Gems at 7:05 pm at the Lisle Sports Complex at Benedictine University. 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.