

# Dragons Tie Biggest Run Output of Season in Win

As legend would have it, Dragons are creatures that blow fire when they're angry. After being shut out Saturday night in the last game of their road trip, the DuPage Dragons scorched the Quincy Gems Monday night in bouncing back with a 13-3 victory. The win improved the Dragons to 13-11 on the season while the Gems fell to 10-15.

DuPage started early, putting two runs on the board in the first inning. Second baseman Kevin Tokarski (Illinois State) led things off with a single on the first pitch of the game. Designated hitter Ryan Duffy (Mississippi State) followed that up with a double to center and the Dragons had two runners in scoring position before recording an out. After the next two hitters were retired on good defensive plays, first baseman Justin Behm (Northern Illinois) knocked a two-RBI single to give the Dragons the early lead.

Dragons starter Brian Stroud (Western Michigan) struggled to find the plate early on in the contest. In the third, it appeared to catch up to him as the Gems were able to tie the game. Oliver Palmer reached on a fielding error, and Alex Acheson followed up with a double to put runners in scoring position with one out. A passed ball allowed Palmer to score, then, after a strikeout, Tyler Goodro hit a single that scored Acheson and tied the contest at two.

The Dragons bounced right back in the bottom of the inning. Tokarski smacked his second single of the game, then, after a fielder's choice, shortstop Jordan Tokarz (Eastern Illinois) hit a single to put runners on the corners. Third baseman Phil Wunderlich (Louisville) knocked an RBI single to score Tokarski, and then Behm followed with his second RBI single of the night to score Tokarz. Catcher Matt Behren (Northern Illinois) hit a blast to rightfield for a double, but Wunderlich, holding at second in case the ball was caught, was thrown out at home on a good relay by the Gems. The inning ended with the Dragons leading Quincy 4-2.

DuPage got back to work in the sixth. Leftfielder Nick Popescu (Bradley) led off the inning with a single to right, followed by Tokarski's fourth single of the game. After a fly out and a pitching change, Tokarz hit an RBI single to score Popescu and put runners on the corners. A wild pitch allowed Tokarski to score and Tokarz to advance to second, then a fly out and another wild pitch allowed Tokarz to advance to third. This put Behm in position to hit his third RBI single of the game, and the Dragons had a commanding 7-2 lead.

Stroud settled down after the third inning and dominated the rest of the game. He lasted seven innings, allowing only the two runs in the third, both of which were unearned. He didn't walk a batter while striking out seven to lower his team-leading ERA to a microscopic 0.64. Nick Kurash (Miami (Ohio)) came in to relieve him in the eighth, but after facing two hitters, the Gems had already scored a run to put themselves within striking distance. But Kurash settled down to retire the next three hitters on ground outs and get out of the jam.

The Dragons pulled away in the bottom of the inning. After the first hitter lined out to start the inning, six consecutive Dragons reached base as they built an insurmountable lead. Wunderlich started the rally with a double to rightfield. Behm knocked his fourth hit of the game to put runners on the corners, and then Behren was hit by a pitch for the second time to load the bases. Three consecutive singles by rightfielder Pete Capetta (Illinois), centerfielder Dave Reynolds (Northern Illinois), and Popescu scored three runs and kept the bases loaded for the top of the order. Tokarski was retired for the first time in the game on a great diving play by the Gems second baseman, but another run was able to cross the plate. Duffy followed with a two-RBI double to bring the score to 13-3. Reynolds came on in the ninth to seal the victory, retiring all three hitters he faced and the last two on strikeouts.

All nine starters for DuPage got a hit in the contest, with seven of them having multi-hit games. Justin Behm made his return to the lineup after taking a week off due to a death in the family and went 4-

for-5 with four RBI. Kevin Tokarski also went 4-for-5 with a walk, an RBI, and scored three runs. Brian Stroud picked up his first victory of the season.

The DuPage Dragons will take on the Quincy Gems once more Tuesday night, July 8th, 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.