

Sports

Falcons top Lynx in season opener

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Baseball season openers are predictably unpredictable, and Monday's contest between city foes St. Albert and Abraham Lincoln fit the bill.

The host Falcons earned an early lead only to see it erased by the third inning. But thanks to some timely hitting and an impressive performance from its sophomore starting pitcher, St. Albert mustered an 8-5 victory at Chuck Wolever Field.

"Whenever you open a season, you never really know what's going to happen in that first game," St. Albert coach Ken Schreiber said. "And whenever you play a city game, it's going to be competitive and spirited."

Schreiber's words held true. A Paul Johnson RBI-single and a two-run homer by Jake Gentile gave the Falcons a 3-0 edge after one inning.

That lead held until the third when the A.L. offense came alive. Collin Crowl's RBI single and Nate Place's run on a wild pitch cut the deficit to two. A.L. starting pitcher Keith Grap then delivered the biggest blow of the inning when he connected on a two-run homer two batters later, giving the Lynx their first lead at 4-3.

The Falcons evened things in their half of the third when starting pitcher Ben Hecker's infield single scored Andrew Brown.

Alex Crowl briefly returned the lead to the Lynx in the fourth on his solo homer, but the Falcons responded with three runs. An RBI double from Brown and a two-RBI single from Jake Waters gave St. Albert a 7-5 advantage.

That lead held for good. Hecker settled down to earn the win, tossing 5 2/3 innings while striking out four before giving way to Jake Waters, who recorded the final four outs to earn the save.

Although he saw his team relinquish an early lead, Schreiber was proud of the way his players responded to adversity.

"I thought we kept our cool and our composure real well, and I thought that was the key to the victory," Schreiber said. "Our dugout never changed their attitude. Their spirits stayed up and they kept battling. That's just the key to any good team."

A.L. coach James Larsen learned plenty about his squad Monday. The Lynx hit the ball well early in the game but didn't record a hit after the fourth inning.

They also hurt themselves defensively, allowing six baserunners on either walks or hit batters. A.L. committed two errors in the sixth inning, leading to a St. Albert insurance run.

"It all comes down to pitching, and walks and errors killed us tonight," Larsen said. "Our bats also went flat after the fourth inning.

"I give credit to (St. Albert). They put the bat on the ball and put pressure on our defense, and we didn't do that."

Abraham Lincoln (0-1) 004 100 0 - 5 6 3

St. Albert (1-0) 301 301 x 8 - 10 1

W: Hecker. L: Grap. S: Waters

2B: AL, Webster, Leisinger. SA, Brown. HR: AL, Grap, A. Crowl. SA, Gentile.