

Six-Run Fourth Inning Is Difference as Belleville Post 74 Eliminates Alton Post 126 7-1 in District 22 Playoffs

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HIGHLAND – Belleville Post 74 scored six runs in the bottom of the fourth inning, the biggest blow a two-out, bases-clearing double by Colin Shea, to give Belleville a 7-1 win over Alton Post 126 in the Illinois American Legion District 22 playoffs Thursday night at Glik Park in Highland.

The loss was the third straight to Belleville for the Legionnaires and eliminated Alton from the playoffs.

The game started out well for Alton, as Jayce Maag led off by reaching on an error, then was sacrificed to second by Gage Booten. Cullen McBride then singled home Maag

with the first run of the game and had a chance to add on more after a single by Ethan Kopsie put runners on first and second. A fielder's choice and a ground out ended the inning.

The Hilgards tied the game up in the home half of the first. With one out, Josh Dima doubled to left, and after a line out to second, Jack Ysursa's single to left scored Dima to tie the game at 1-1. A pop out to short ended the inning.

The two starting pitchers – McBride for Alton and Shea for Belleville – got the sides out in both the second and third, but Alton had a chance to take the lead back in the fourth. Ryan Best reached on an error by the centerfielder to lead off, then was sacrificed to second by Adam Stilts. A pair of strikeouts from Shea ended the inning.

The Hilgards then exploded for their six-run fourth to put the game away. It started with one out when Tyler Adams doubled to center, and an Alex Bernard single to left put runners on the corners. Dillon Sunnquist singled home Adams to put Belleville on top 2-1, then Zach Knight came in relief of McBride. Back-to-back singles by Ben Stedman and Justin Goerger brought in two more runs to make it 4-1, after which Stilts was brought in to pitch. A Will Lanxon single loaded the bases, and after a strikeout for the second out of the inning, Shea doubled to center field to score Stedman, Goerger, and Lanxon to make it 7-1 for Belleville. A strikeout ended the inning.

The Legionnaires did have an opportunity in the top of the sixth, when with two out, Best reached on an infield single, and Stilts drew a walk, but a strikeout ended the inning. Nate Lemons led off the seventh by reaching on an error, but Shea got a flyout and a double play to end the game in favor of the Hilgards 7-1.

Shea went all the way in gaining the win, striking out seven, while Stilts pitched well in relief, going two-and-two-thirds innings, allowing three hits and fanning five.

The Legionnaires finished the 2019 summer season 16-9.