

ST. LOUIS METRO COLLEGIATE BASEBALL

THE METRO MINUTE

by Bob Totterer

CHAMPIONSHIP - GAME THREE

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		R	H	E	LOB
Alton	0	2	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	WP: Drew Schrader	8	11	1	13
St. Charles	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	4	X	LP: Jon Levin SV: Kevin Lenkman	9	8	3	9

ALTON INDIANS

Player	AB	H	R	RBI	BB*
Zac Zellers	5	1	0	1	1
Zach Steed	4	2	2	1	2
Zach Hawkins	6	0	0	0	0
Ian Sikes	5	1	1	1	0
Thad Hawkins	4	1	2	1	1
Nick Johnson	4	2	2	3	1
Ryan Richardson	1	0	0	0	4
Mitch Brasher	5	2	0	0	0
Keith Wolf	4	2	1	0	1

ST. CHARLES MULES

Player	AB	H	R	RBI	BB*
Preston Aldridge	5	2	1	0	0
Justin Wilson	2	0	2	0	3
Jerry Mancuso	3	0	1	0	2
Lendon Ehlmann	4	1	1	1	1
C.J. Rose	4	1	2	4	1
Lucas Calderon	4	3	1	2	1
Greg Dambach	4	1	0	2	0
David Sprick	3	0	0	0	0
Bo Akers	1	0	0	0	0
Mike Hollander	2	0	1	0	1

* - Includes hit batsmen

Coach Scott Turmail is a superstitious sort. Or maybe he's just been around the game of baseball long enough to know not to be overconfident. In either case, he refused to talk about the NABF World Series Tuesday evening after bringing his Alton Indians team to the threshold of the Metro League Championship. There was yet a game to win and fortunes in this game often turn on a single pitch.

The Alton offense was clicking early. After Thad Hawkins reached on an error in the second inning, Nick Johnson hit an absolute bomb over the scoreboard in rightfield. They plated three more runs on four hits in the third, chasing St. Charles starter, Jerry Mancuso. When Alton ace, Joey Grzywacz, took the mound to start the fourth, some of the Indians fans were mentally icing the champagne. And why not? They had a commanding lead with their main man out on the hill. But Joey G. was out of sorts. Pitching on an extra day's rest, he had trouble finding the strike zone, running the counts big on a number of batters. Nevertheless, being the competitor he is, he knuckled down and kept the Mules at bay. Grzywacz exited with a 7-3 lead after six innings, having scattered six hits and stranded eight Mules runners.

Chris Campbell took the ball for Alton in the bottom of the seventh. After hitting Ehlmann and walking Calderon, he faced Greg Dambach with two out and two on. Greg slammed a double into the gap in left-center, driving in two much-needed runs. St. Charles now trailed by only two. The drama continued in the St. Charles eighth when two walks put the tying runs on base with one out. Turmail then brought Jon Levin into the contest to face Mules DH, Jerry Mancuso, who took a 2-1 pitch off his arm and trotted to first to load the bases. When Lendon Ehlmann struck out on four pitches, it appeared that Alton might wriggle out of the jam. Up came C.J. Rose. After working the count to 2-2, Levin was one pitch away. One pitch. Rose turned on that pitch and launched a rocket to left field, which disappeared over the fence for a dramatic, lead-changing grand slam.

But we weren't finished yet. With two on and two out in the top of the ninth, Zac Zellers singled in the eighth Alton run. A wild pitch then sent the tying and go-ahead runs to second and third. Coach Evers brought in Eric Estes who hit Zach Steed to load the bases and thus the drama continued. Coach Evers must not like drama. He brought Kevin Lenkman to the hill to face the dangerous Zach Hawkins with the sacks jammed. Hawkins scorched a 2-2 pitch deep to center field, with centerfielder David Sprick on his horse and racing to close the gap. Either three runs would score to tip the scales or St. Charles would secure a one-run victory to keep their hopes alive. Every patron in the park came to their feet, straining to see the outcome; the hopes of all riding on one single play. In full stride, Sprick reached out to snare the drive and squeezed it for the final out.

One pitch. The fortunes of a baseball team can dramatically change on just one pitch. On Wednesday evening, C.J. Rose drove that pitch into the night sky, lifting his team off the mat. They still face elimination tonight at BMAC, but they are just one win away from the deciding game number five. And, owing to the poetic justice of the baseball gods, toeing the rubber for the Mules this evening will be the hero of game number three ... C.J. Rose.