

**SPORTS**



An early evening of baseball ended with some bad weather, but a victory for the Rockville Express over the Maryland Redbirds, 3-1.

PHOTOS BY MAUREA EBERT

# Lightning strikes as Express takes Redbirds 3-1

By Mike Brody  
Special to the Sentinel

Usually seven hits combined for two teams in a baseball game would seem a little low. Then again, most baseball games make it past the sixth inning. Sunday's game between the Rockville Express and Maryland Redbirds did not.

The Express defeated the Redbirds 3-1 in a game that was called in the bottom of the sixth inning, just after the game had become official. Lightning had delayed the game once already and ultimately led to the cancellation of the contest during a second play stoppage. With the victory in the regular season finale, the Express became co-champions of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Collegiate Baseball League with Youse's Maryland Orioles.

The Express grabbed an early 1-0 lead in the bottom of the first inning. Bruce Alter singled to start the frame and reached third after the Redbirds committed an error on Travis Babin's sacrifice bunt at-

tempt. Babin advanced to second on the play. Alter then scored on Steve Domecus groundout.

The Redbirds tied the game in the top of the third inning when Gerardo Gaceres singled Rick Oliveri home. But the Redbirds left two runners stranded as Tony Jusino groundout and Matt Parker popped out to end the inning.

The Express took the lead for good in the bottom of the fourth inning on a Bean Brooks sacrifice fly and added a third run in the bottom of the fifth inning on a Domecus sacrifice fly.

"We're playing well right now," Domecus said. "We're putting things together and unlike we were earlier this year, it's just good rolling into the playoffs winning games like this."

Starting pitcher Phillip Urso and reliever Travis Babin split pitching duties for the Express as each of them went three innings. Babin did not give up any hits during his performance and picked up the win. Redbirds starter Ryan Kuhlman

pitched five innings and gave up three runs. But all of the runs scored off Kuhlman were unearned, as the Redbirds committed four errors in the game.

"It was just one of those where we finish out the regular season," Express head coach Tom Shaffer said. "It was still a big game for us, and with the weather, it's just been a weird day so far with all the lightning, with all the rain that's coming, with dark clouds that are out there. We just wanted to come out and try to score early and try to get five and a half in, and if it rained, then it rained."

The win for the Express capped off a tremendous week of play as the team won nine games straight to close the season. Four of those wins came over a two-day period. The Express took a doubleheader from the Herndon Braves on Friday, winning the two games by scores of 6-5 and 7-6. On Saturday, the Express swept two games from the Bethesda Big Train, winning by scores of 3-2 and 7-0.

"Today was our eighth game in a row since Tuesday. I don't care what teams you're playing. If you go 8-0 in five days or six days, that's pretty damn good," Shaffer said. "So we're pretty excited about the way we finished the year off, and it's our first time being at the top at the end of the season but our goals are not

met yet. And we still have the one big thing to go and that's to win that championship at the end of the year, and that's what we're setting our sights on."

The postseason for the League begins this week. You can visit the Express' Web site at [www.rockville-express.org](http://www.rockville-express.org).

**Maryland 1 (12-30)**

Player	AB	R	H	RR	BB	SO	PO	A	LOB
Gerardo Gaceres	3	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	1
Tony Jusino	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0
Matt Parker	3	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	0
Gerardo Gaceres	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Tim Powers	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Kevin Spivey	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rick Oliveri	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phil Oliveri	1	1	1	0	1	0	4	1	0
Matt Boyd	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Ryan Kuhlman	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Total	19	1	3	1	3	15	6	3	15

**Rockville 3 (27-15)**

Player	AB	R	H	RR	BB	SO	PO	A	LOB
Bruce Alter	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	4
Travis Babin	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Steve Domecus	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Eric Allen	3	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	1
Mike Zuzick	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Bean Brooks	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0
Rick Oliveri	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phil Oliveri	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Matt Boyd	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Phil Oliveri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phil Oliveri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	17	3	4	3	1	4	10	0	4

**Score by Inning**

	R	H	E		
Maryland	001	000	1	3	4
Rockville	100	11X	3	4	0

E - Oliveri; Justin Oliveri; Kuhlman, DP - Express 1, LOB - Redbirds 3; Express 4, SH - Babin; Zuzick, SF - Domecus; Brooks, SB - Alter; Babin; CS - Gaceres, Altz.