



PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release
September 10, 2011

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Alonso's 11th-inning hit keeps AirHogs alive 3-2 nail-biter forces Game 4 vs. Saints on Sunday

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas – Apparently lightning can strike three times, as for the third time in as many home playoff games for the Grand Prairie AirHogs, John Alonso was the final batter and David Espinosa scored the winning, run, this time on an 11th inning single to beat the St. Paul Saints 3-2 and force a fourth game in the best-of-five American Association Championship Series in front of 1,059 fans at QuikTrip Park.

St. Paul, which still leads the series two games to one, scored first on Saturday night when Shane Costa hit a home run with one out in the first off Josh Rainwater, the first homer of the playoffs and second in 53 games this season for Costa.

Alonso, who homered in each of the first two games at home against Wichita in the Division Series, answered with another opposite-field shot in the second against Saints starter Jake Schmidt to tie the game. It was Alonso again who got the AirHogs their second run, grounding into a double play with first and third in the sixth to make it 2-1, and for a bit, it looked like a mirror image of Game 4 against Wichita, when the AirHogs fell behind 1-0, got the winning run on a double play, and used a great starting effort by John Brownell to advance to this round.

From Ole Sheldon's two-out single in the first until Adam Frost's one-out single in the sixth, Rainwater retired 14 straight hitters, getting Costa on a 3-6-3 double play to end the sixth after Frost's base hit.

After the AirHogs grabbed the lead in the sixth, Ryan Patterson led off the seventh with a hit. He moved to second when Rainwater hit Sheldon and went to third on Ronnie Bourquin's sacrifice bunt, bringing up Richard Mercado. The St. Paul catcher lined one to left at David Thomas, who caught the ball and fired home, but a bit to the foul side of the third-base line. Catcher Chris McMurray slid over to catch the ball, and then dove back across the plate to tag out Patterson, trying to tag up and score.

But Rainwater ended up being unable to hold the lead, as Jason Cooper hit a solo home run leading off the eighth to tie the game. Rainwater got through the eighth, and departed with his first no-decision in 22 starts in 2011 (including his two in the postseason). He finished with five hits, no walks and three strikeouts, with the two runs he allowed on the solo homers.

Schmidt left after six innings for the Saints, giving up seven hits and a walk, and also struck out three. Kyle Foster allowed one hit in four otherwise perfect relief innings, with a scare when Cesar Nicolas hit a fly ball to the track to end the eighth.

Grand Prairie closer Jon Hunton worked around two baserunners in the ninth and shortstop German Duran made up for a dropped pop-up by throwing out the hitter Aharon Eggleston getting back to first to help Hunton through a three-batter 10th, while Jon Fulton (1-0) got an inning-ending double play from Sheldon after intentionally walking Patterson to put runners at first and second with two outs in the 11th.

Lefty Jesse English (0-1) came on for St. Paul in the bottom of the 11th, and started by walking Espinosa. While he did strike out the lefty-swinging Porter for the first out, Espinosa broke for second on strike three and Mercado's throw

bounced past both middle infielders into centerfield, allowing Espinosa to get to third with one out. The Saints then elected to intentionally walk Nicolas, and brought in righty Julio DePaula to face Alonso, who fouled off the first two offerings.

But Alonso got a breaking ball that stayed up enough, and he muscled it over the drawn-in infield and landed it in front of the drawn-in outfield, with Espinosa touching home to keep the AirHogs' season alive.

Notes: The Saints were held to a series-low six hits, with no player recording more than one...Stephen Douglas went 0-for-5, the first time in 36 games with the AirHogs and 62 games overall that he failed to reach base safely at least once...German Duran (ribs) returned to the AirHogs lineup after missing the last three games. He was 1-for-4 with a walk...This was the AirHogs' first win in six games (including the regular season) against the Saints this year.

The AirHogs and Saints play Game 4 of the 2011 American Association Championship at QuikTrip Park in Grand Prairie on Sunday, September 11, at 2:05 p.m. Righty John Brownell will go for Grand Prairie, while with St. Paul's starter still to be announced. All games are available with live, free streaming video on ustream.tv. Individual game tickets are on sale and can be purchased by calling 972-504-9383 or by visiting www.airhogsbaseball.com

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