



St. Peters, Alton shut down Edwardsville 4-1

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Going into Tuesday's early Southwestern Conference showdown against **Alton**, **Edwardsville's baseball team** hadn't been on the losing end of a league game for quite awhile.

Something like close to two years, in fact; O'Fallon defeated the Tigers in a league game in May 2014. EHS had gone unbeaten in the 2015 league campaign, defeating the Redbirds three times, including the IHSA Class 4A regional final at Tom Pile Field.

The Redbirds' Jacob St. Peters took the ball against the Tigers' Jake Garella, and St. Peters went in thinking he was only going to be throwing the first two innings.

St. Peters, though, came through with a performance much like those he had as he had as part of the Metro East Bears American Legion last summer, keeping the Tigers in check all day as the Redbirds, also taking advantage of four EHS errors, defeated Edwardsville 4-1.

“After the second inning,” St. Peters said, “**(Redbird coach Todd Haug)** told me to go out again and after that, he said, 'batter-to-batter. You never know when you're going to get pulled, just do your best.' “

St. Peters was definitely on his game; he wound up giving up just five hits and one run (which was earned) while striking out 10 to get the win.

“My slider,” St. Peters said when asked which pitch was working best for him. “It was just on; it couldn't had been any better.”

Haug said preparation for the Tigers was key to Tuesday's win. “We had three really good days to prepare; we put in a little time – not that we don't have the resources to do it consistently – but we put in a little extra time scouting, getting a good read on them and we had a very, very good game plan going in.

“We kind of harnessed the St. Peters from the summertime; his arm slot was a little bit better today. He was consistently pitching ahead, had multiple pitches going and credit to him and credit to the defense behind him.”

Edwardsville coach Tim Funkhouser gave St. Peters plenty of credit for shutting the Tigers down. “Their pitcher (St. Peters) executed, so you credit him, but we look at our end a lot at what we needed to do, and we obviously need to get better playing the game, too,” Funkhouser said. “Their guy was really good on the mound, we didn't play well in the field and we didn't have good at-bats.”

Garella himself had a pretty good outing; he struck out 10 in five innings of work while giving up three hits and no earned runs in cool, somewhat windy conditions. “It's such a tough day to get a feel for your breaking pitch,” Funkhouser said, “and (Garella) was able to overcome that. The way he pitched, we needed to do better on our end, on the offensive end and defensive end.

“Right now, we're not playing the game that well; we don't think the game that well, we don't execute, obviously, the game that well and we're not making adjustment within the game. We're not going to be that good when we do that.”

The Redbirds got their first run in the second when Aaron Bonnell singled and stole second. Garella responded by striking out Steven Patten and Sam Ballard, bringing Noah Rathgeb to the plate. Rathgeb grounded to third, but the throw sailed away, allowing Matt McDonald, who was courtesy running for Bonnell, to come home.

In the Redbird fifth, Ballard singled and stole second, then Rathgeb walked to put runners at first and second. Ryan Boyd sacrificed both over to leave first base open; Derrick Allen then grounded to second but the throw home to get Ballard bounced away to allow both Ballard and Rathgeb to score to up the Redbird lead to 3-0.

Jacob Kanallakan walked to open the Alton sixth and was replaced by McDonald as a pinch-runner; he stole second and then went to third and scored on a pair of wild pitches to increase the lead to 4-0. Edwardsville responded with a run in the bottom of the sixth when Collin Clayton got a one-out double and came home on a Garella single.

The Tigers had a big chance, though, in the fifth, when Garella got a one-out single and went to third on a hit-and-run when Joel Quirin singled; he subsequently stole second, but both were stranded when St. Peters got both Tyler Stamer and Cole Hansel on strikeouts to end the threat.

The win put the Redbirds at 7-3 overall and 2-1 in the SWC; the Tigers fell to 10-3 overall, 2-1 in the league. Alton travels to Waterloo for a 4:15 p.m. Wednesday game before going to Granite City's Babe Champion Field for a 4:30 p.m. Thursday game; the Tigers go to Belleville West for a 4:30 p.m. Thursday league game.

