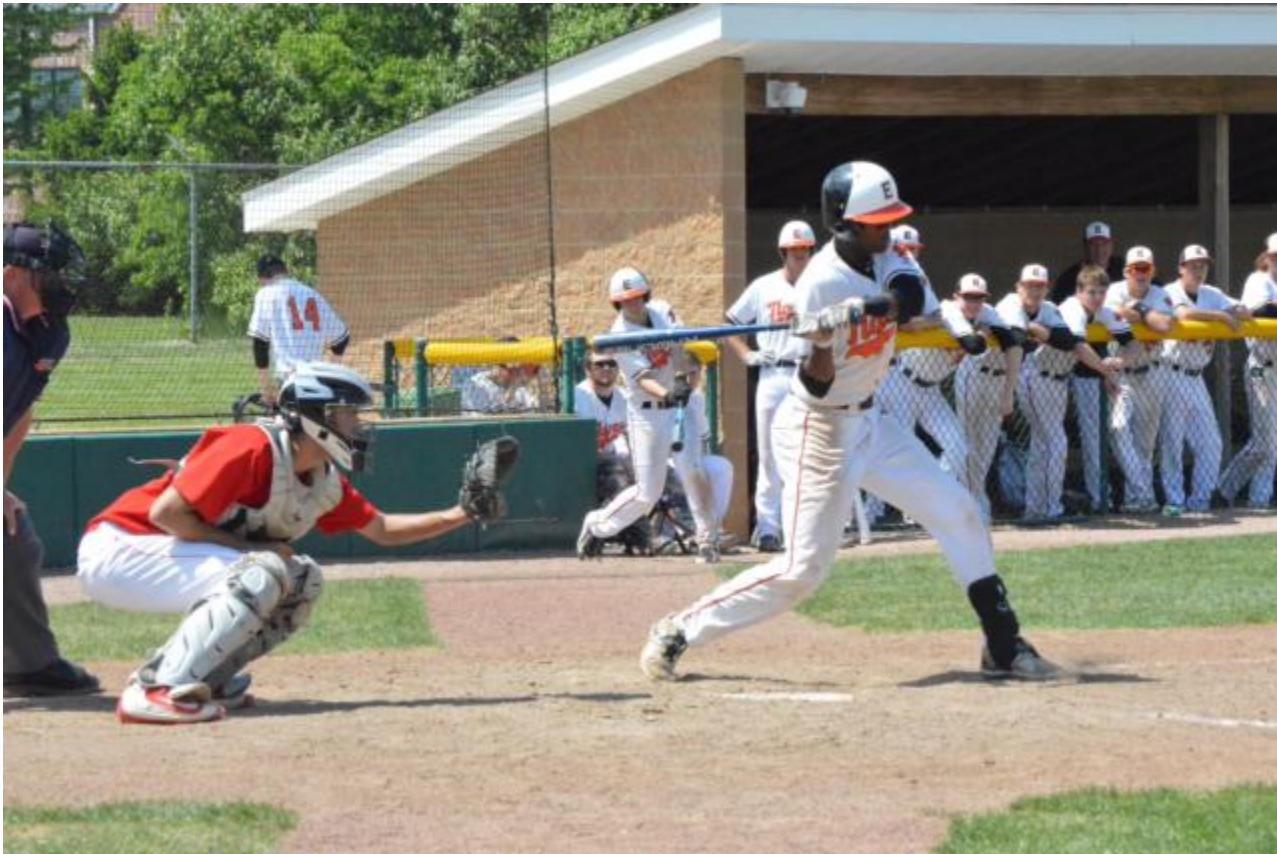


Tigers demonstrate improvement on baseball situational skills

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville Tigers manager Tim Funkhouser has emphasized on improving his teams' situational skills in practice and implements them when it matters.

"We'll do more situational stuff beyond the situational stuff we used to do and make it competitive," Funkhouser said. "I think our guys are carrying that over in practice."

Practice has been paying off as the Tigers defeated the Lockport Porters 11-1 in five innings at Tom Pile Field in Edwardsville on Friday night, then captured two more wins on Saturday over Highland and Chatham Glenwood.

“It’s honestly just us working harder in the cages and getting our work in,” Collin Clayton said. “We kind of weren’t focused towards the beginning of year, but we’re alright now putting in some good work in practices.”

Joe Wallace and Cole Hansel each went 2-for-3 to propel the Tigers offensive attack on Friday.

“I like the pace we’re playing the game at and the beat of what can I do on the next pitch or what can I do to get to the next base,” Funkhouser said.

Tyler Hosto through 5.0 innings allowing one run (unearned) on five hits, while striking out six Porters and walked one.

Hosto started out slow by giving up surrendering his only run of the game in the first inning, but Edwardsville responded in the bottom half of the inning with a three-run home run by Tyler Stamer.

It was Stamer’s eighth round tripper of the season.

“He’s got a potent bat,” Funkhouser said. “He got a pitch and he’s not missing those with his power and it goes far.”

Stamer’s homer also gave Hosto a sigh of relief.

“The first inning was a struggle, I couldn’t get my rhythm,” Hosto said. “Seeing Stamer hit the three-run shot was a big confidence booster and helped me get the routine going again throughout the game.”

In the top half of the second inning, Hosto again ran into trouble, but got out unscathed by striking out the side with runners in scoring position.

The following inning, the Porters threatened by putting men on base, but Hosto induced a 1-6-3 double play with runners on the corners.

For the rest of the game, Hosto was in control and worked through innings quickly.

“I think it was the positive vibe scoring a couple of runs and I tried to do my best keeping the positive vibe on the mound and just keep working,” Hosto said. “That’s what the team did at the plate too.”

The Tigers offense bats found their rhythm in the fourth inning and onward.

Hansel, Wallace, and Andrew Yancik hit three straight singles to make it 4-1 Tigers.

Next up was leadoff hitter, Collin Clayton, who proceeded to beat out a throw from the Lockport shortstop for an infield single, that drove in Wallace to add to the growing lead at 5-1.

Cole Cimarolli stepped up and hit a single through hole at third and short that brought in Yancik and Clayton.

When the throw from left field came to home plate, Cimarolli took off for second base and was safe.

The throw from the Porters catcher sailed into center field while nobody was in the vicinity, which gave Cimarolli the green light to run home and took full advantage of it.

“Speed can create a lot of havoc,” Funkhouser said. “Credit him for getting the hit and driving in the two, but also figuring out of trying to get to second base.”

The little league home run gave Edwardsville an 8-1 lead and they would add to it in the fifth and final inning by scoring three runs.

Cimarolli finished off Lockport with a sacrifice fly to drive in the winning run.

“Cimarolli has gained a lot of confidence over the last month and had a better feel for his swing and his mind is playing at a faster pace,” Funkhouser said.

Almost a week ago, Tyler Hosto committed to play baseball for the University of Indianapolis and it’s been a relief for the senior lefty.

“I feel a lot more comfortable on the mound, even like going to practice every day I don’t have to worry about what my future is and knowing that I’m pitching at a D2 with big facilities,” Hosto said. “I’m just trying to make myself better everyday.”

Since he committed, Hosto is 2-0.