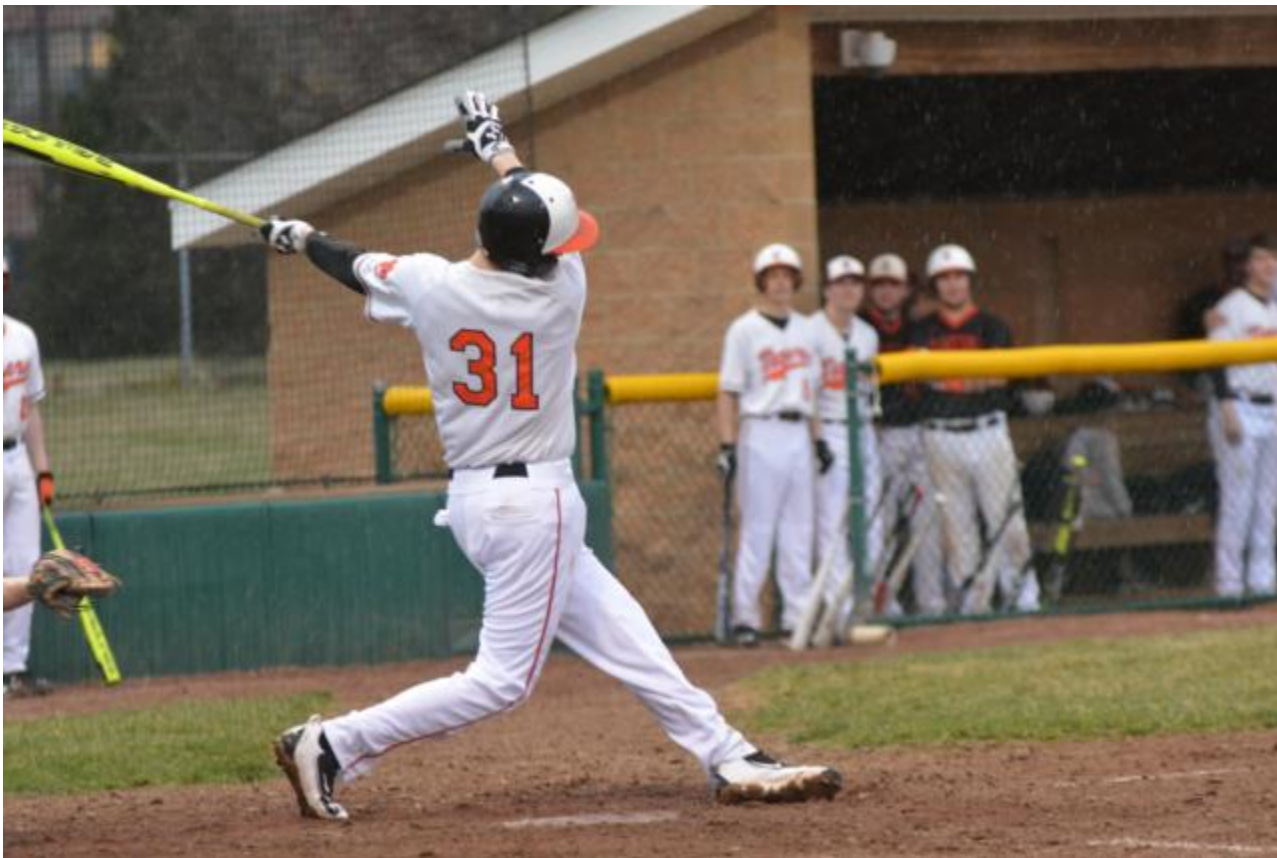
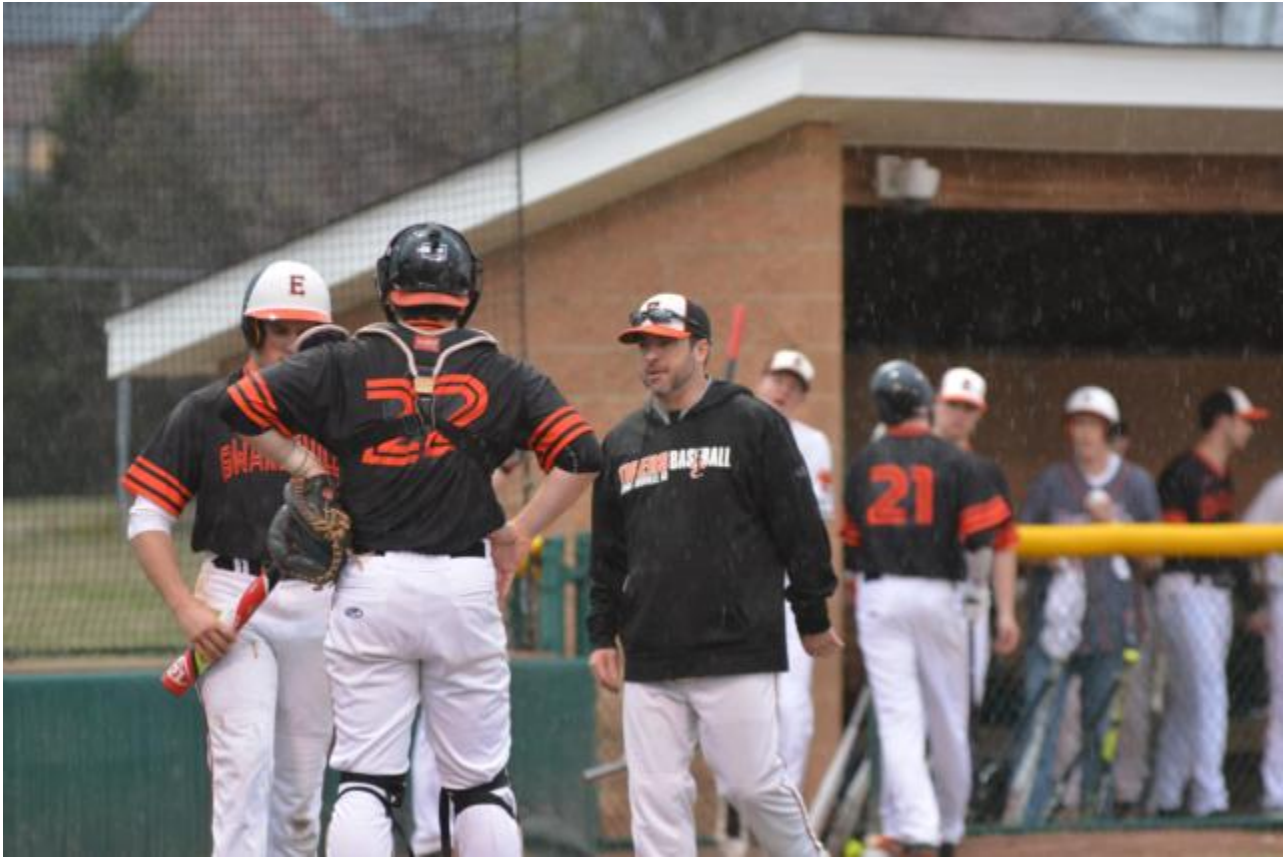


# Edwardsville bats come out swinging in Tiger Preview Game despite rain

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
March 10 2017 6:30 AM





EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville's baseball team is making preparations for another season.

The Tigers began preseason practice recently with the 2017 season-opener well within sight, with home games against Chicagoland schools Plainfield South and Joliet Catholic opening the season St. Patrick's Day weekend in the Metro East Kickoff Classic showcase, presented by the web site Prep Baseball Report; games will feature area teams throughout the weekend, beginning March 16, with games at Tom Pile Field, GCS Ballpark in Sauget and Blazier Field in O'Fallon.

“We've had a good start,” said Tiger coach Tim Funkhouser. “We've had several good days and a few days that were a bit colder or windy, but still got our work in during that time; we've gone through the assessment phase of tryouts and now we're getting into the teaching phase, with skill development and preparation for our Tiger Preview Game (which was moved up to Thursday evening with cold temperatures and snow in the forecast for Saturday; the game was stopped by showers a few innings into the game, though the Tiger players were able to get some at-bats and pitches in).

“We'll open pretty quick this year (March 16 against Plainfield South at 7 p.m.); it'll be a great test for us early on. Those are heck of teams to play, but we want to put our guys in a situation to be challenged and see what we're made of and learn from the mistakes we might make and gain confidence if we do well.”

Last year's Tigers finished the year 29-8, being eliminated in the IHSA Class 4A Belleville West Regional final by the host Maroons. While it's still early, Funkhouser, who will be entering his 19th year as coach of the Tigers, is expecting some of his returning players to make contributions this season. “Dylan Burris has been a two-year starter for us,” Funkhouser said. “He was excellent for us as a sophomore and moved over to center (field) last year; he played half the year for us last year before an injury to his leg and missed the second half of the year.

“He was hitting .448 last year and blasting balls around the field; he can really run and do some things there; he's been a two-year returner. We've got several guys who, if they didn't start the whole year, they started a portion of the year. Kade Burns, Joel Quirin and Andrew Yancik all were in the middle infield positions and Andrew was on (the pitcher's mound) last year; Kade will throw this year.

“Will Messer played some outfield for us towards the end of the year and also plays other positions well; Andrew Frank was on the bump last year and some other guys got limited time on the mound. It'll be a nice, fun atmosphere to see where we are and go from there.”

Edwardsville's basketball success this season is a reflection of the overall excellence of the Tiger athletic program, Funkhouser feels. “Our sports programs – really, all the programs at EHS – are outstanding,” Funkhouser said. “It's fun to watch those guys compete on the basketball floor and the girls just to finish and have the great year that they had, it's a competitive atmosphere and also an atmosphere where people want to excel at various things.

“It's fun to see them do that; it's fun to follow those teams. You want to support them as much as you can; we follow all the different activities in sports – they're integral to the success here in Edwardsville.”