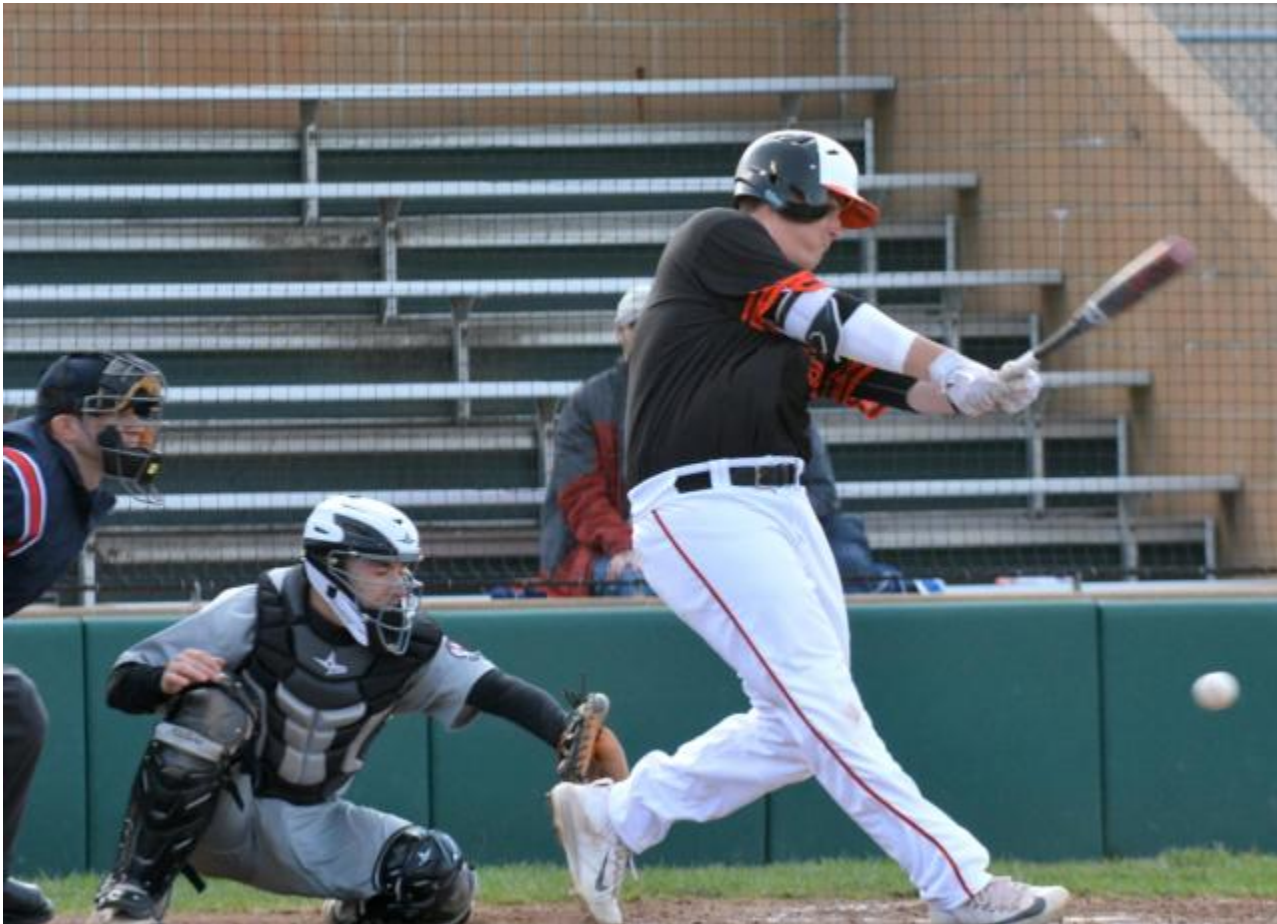


Tigers win close league contest over Alton to go to 9-0 on year

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
April 5 2017 6:52 AM





EDWARDSVILLE – Alton and Edwardsville have had quite the baseball rivalry the past few years. Games between the two Southwestern Conference teams have been close and hard-fought.

Tuesday afternoon's encounter was no exception, with Edwardsville pitcher Kade Burns and Alton pitcher Robbie Taul hooking up in what turned out to be a pitcher's duel, the difference coming in the bottom of the fourth when Tiger freshman Drake Westcott launched a Taul offering over the fence in right-center to give Edwardsville all they really needed as the Tigers took a 2-0 win over the Redbirds at EHS' Tom Pile Field.

The Tigers went to 9-0 overall, 3-0 in the SWC; the Redbirds fell to 8-2, 0-2 in the league. The game, originally scheduled for Redbird Field, was switched to Tom Pile Field when a sudden rainstorm hit the Alton area not long before the scheduled start time.

“It was a good win for us,” said Tiger coach Tim Funkhouser. “We didn't swing the bats as well as we would like and they had a tough time scratching out some baserunners as

well. Kade Burns has been outstanding for us all year and he didn't disappoint again. Just a couple of little things – Drake Westcott squared one up and he put a good swing on one and we were able to get another run scratched out with (Joel) Quirin getting the single to drop in; Blake Burris did a great job running on the pitch.

“Drake got another hit with two strikes and he showed his versatility; he's not a big fly guy. Overall, our pitching has been outstanding this year. Offensively, we've scored some runs, but we know we have a lot more upside there and a lot more room for improvement; that'll come as the season progresses.”

Burns gave up just three hits in 6.1 innings of work, two of them coming in the top of the seventh, and struck out 10, four of them coming in the first inning when Mike Hampton reached on a dropped third strike. Only one other baserunner reached before the seventh on Burns, when Adam Stilts reached on a single, and he was erased on a double play the next man up.

After getting off to an 8-0 start, the Redbirds have dropped their last two games, both league contests to O'Fallon and the Tigers.

“There's no moral victories here,” said Redbird coach Todd Haug. “I'm not trying to just keep it close; we have some things we need to work on and they got an earful in terms of the expectations – there were some things I wasn't happy with in terms of how we executed that were not necessarily baseball fundamentals, but more so the approach to the game. The expectations were reiterated and we'll deal with the baseball side tomorrow at practice.”

Both Taul's and Burns' efforts on the mound were a telling factor in the game, Haug felt. “You got a good indication from both sides today,” Haug said, “you don't need a big-time fastball to be successful in this league; what you have to do is mix pitches and have to be able to throw multiple pitches for strikes. If you can do that, you'll be in the ballgame.

“I think both sides did it; we tip our hats to (Burns), he did a good job in terms of location, he got a couple of pitches over, but we didn't do ourselves any favors either. Our approach was lackluster.”

Edwardsville's other run came in the sixth when Quirin led off with a single and was replaced by Burris as a pinch runner; he went to third on a Westcott single running on the pitch to put runners on the corners. Reid Hendrickson then grounded into a double play that scored Burris and give EHS an insurance run.

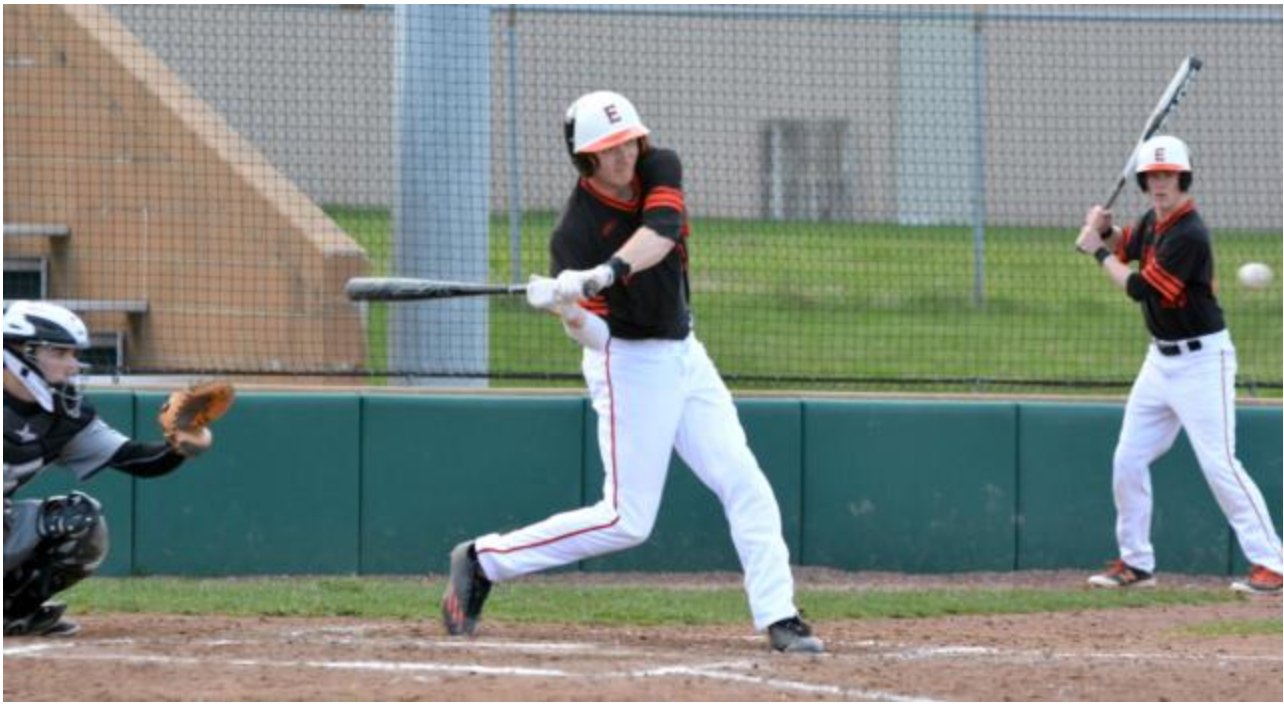
Then came the top of the seventh; Burns got Hampton to ground to third for the first out, then gave up singles to Steven Nguyen and Steven Pattan, with both advancing on a wild pitch. Andrew Yancik then came in to pitch from shortstop and struck out Brandon Droste and Charlie Erler to preserve the win.

That the Tigers have pitchers who can come in and throw a couple of innings or come in to get the win late has been a good thing, Funkhouser thought. "It's been a rare occasion when we've had a closer for our high school team," Funkhouser said. "It's usually been who's ready to throw next; Yancik has been throwing really well too, so he was able to finish it off today and he'll be ready for Thursday (at home against Belleville West) as well."

Westcott was 2-for-3 with the homer, RBI and run scored for the Tigers, with Dylan Burris 1-for-2, Jack Cooper 1-for-2 and Quirin 1-for-3, with Burris getting the other run scored. Steven Nguyen, Pattan and Stilts were all 1-for-3 for the Redbirds on the day. Burns got the win for the Tigers, while Taul took the loss, going four innings, giving up the homer to Westcott on three hits while fanning five. Stilts threw two innings, giving up an earned run on three hits while fanning one.

After Thursday's home league contest against the Maroons, Edwardsville heads to Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin for a 4:30 p.m. Friday game before traveling to Belleville East for a 4:30 p.m. Tuesday league game. The Redbirds host Granite City at 4:30 p.m. Thursday and MICDS of St. Louis in a 1:30 p.m. Saturday doubleheader before meeting Carlyle at 4 p.m. Monday at GCS Ballpark in Sauget.





[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)