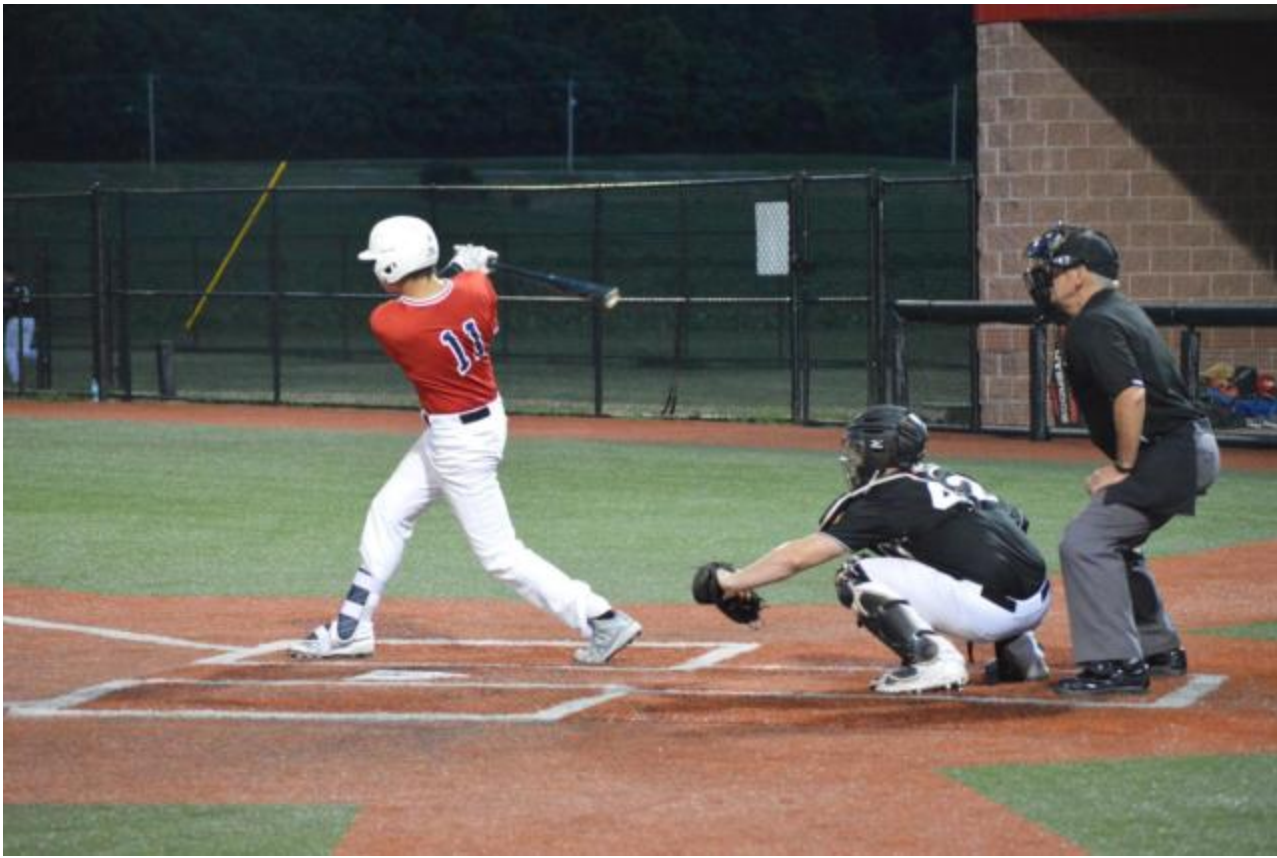


Frank pitches bears past Highland 4-1

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Pitching is one of those things in baseball that can make or break a team.

“Baseball starts with pitching,” said Metro East Bears manager Ken Schaake Tuesday night.

The Bears and Highland got very good pitching performances in their Illinois District 22 American Legion game at SIU-Edwardsville's Roy Lee Field. Both Andrew Frank from the Bears and Elliott Pratt from Highland turned in quality performances.

The Bears, however, managed to get to Pratt for two runs in the bottom of the third and then got to Robert Sigman after he stepped in for Pratt in the bottom of the sixth for two more runs as the Bears took a 4-1 win over Highland to go to 16-4 on the summer, 4-1 in District 22 heading into an 8 p.m. game tonight in Belleville against the Hilgards.

“If we've got pitching or if they've got pitching – and their pitcher (Pratt) did a really fine job, I told him that. He had our guys off-balance except for a couple of hits right in a row, but then Andrew Frank did a fine job for us too,” Schaake said. “A couple of balls that snuck through the right side of the infield hurt us a little bit, but they didn't hit the ball hard against him.

“He got himself into a little trouble with hit batsmen and a walk here or there – that's going to correct itself.”

“We felt it was a great game tonight, even though it was 4-1,” said Highland manager Harry Painter. “Elliott pitched a great game – one of our best-pitched games of the year, and he pitched against Belleville too, and did a great job too. What I liked was that he was mixing it up really big and his change-up, it was hard to decipher between that and the fastball and his body.

“I think that was getting those guys off-balance; they've got some great hitters over there. A couple of timely hits – I think they got more timely hits than us; we had a couple of leadoff hits and we just couldn't move them around.”

Both Frank and Pratt pitched well; Frank had to work his way out of trouble in the first three innings, but a pair of double plays – including a strike-em-out, throw-em-out double play in the third – helped his cause.

Metro East broke through in the bottom of the third when, after getting a pair of forceouts at second for the first two outs, Konnor Loewen – after reaching on the second forceout of the inning – went to third on a ground-rule double by Corey Price; both subsequently came home thanks to a two-RBI single from Cole Hansel that found its way over Highland's first baseman.

Frank settled down and kept Highland off the board until the top of the sixth, when Dillon Halleman reached on an error with one out and came around to score on a Sam Greene single to cut the Bear lead to 2-1. The Bears answered in the bottom of the sixth when, after Joel Quirin walked and Blake Vandiver singled to put two on base, Sigman came in for Pratt. Sigman retired Andrew Yancik, but Quirin and Vandiver executed a successful double steal to put runners at second and third.

Steven Pattan then lifted a sacrifice fly to right to score Quirin, Vandiver advancing to third, then Kade Burns singled in Vandiver to extend the lead to 4-1. Frank gave up a single to Sigman in the top of the seventh but retired the side to preserve the win.

Price went 1-for-3 with a double and run scored for the Bears, with Hansel 1-for-3 with two RBIs, Quirin a run scored, Vandiver 1-for-3 with a run scored, Pattan a RBI on the sacrifice fly, Burns 1-for-3 with a RBI, Will Messer 1-for-3 and Loewen a run scored. Frank went the distance, striking out eight.

Following tonight's game in Belleville, the Bears are at Smithton at 8 p.m. Thursday and at Hazelwood for a game against American-National at 5:45 p.m Friday.

