



Edwardsville battles tough competition in Mid-American Super Sixteen Tournament

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
June 25 2017 9:22 AM





EDWARDSVILLE — The Edwardsville Tigers' junior varsity squad lost 4-3 to the Southside Prospects of St. Louis Saturday afternoon in the Mid-American Super Sixteen Tournament at the Tigers' junior varsity field, but despite some missed opportunities, Edwardsville assistant coach Craig Ohlau was very pleased with the squad's effort.

“The boys battled today,” Ohlau said. “Battled out some good AB’s. We didn’t quite take advantage of the wildness from the starter (pitcher Branden Odenhal), didn’t get the key hit when we needed it, and that came up to bite us at the end.”

The Tigers’ pitching was also good, keeping the Southsiders at bay until the final inning. Edwardsville’s catcher also played a key role in calling the game.

“Ben Basarich behind the plate called a great game for us.” Ohlau said, “Jonathan Yancik was pounding the zone for most of the day; he threw some really nice pitches in there today, got their guys off balance and pitched inside well. And David Grant came in and changed speeds really nicely, and kept them at bay until they snuck in a couple of hits in there at the end.”

The Tigers, serving as the visiting team for the game, got on the board first in the second. Basarich lead off when he reached on a fumbled grounder by the second baseman for an error, then Yancik was hit by a pitch. Basarich scored on Chase Gokel’s

single, with Yancik going to second. Yancik and Gokel executed a double steal, both advanced on a passed ball, Yancik scoring the Tigers' second run. Walks to Zach Crutchfield and Grant loaded the bases, but back-to-back strikeouts ended the inning.

Yancik stopped a Southside rally in the bottom of the frame with runners on second and third with one out, getting Nathan Smith to line out to first and Taylor Haltman to ground to shortstop.

In the top of the third, the Tigers had a chance to extend the lead, starting when Aaron Young was hit by a pitch and stole second. Dalton Wallace then singled; both advanced on a wild pitch, but Young was thrown out at the plate when Joe Toscano hit back to the box, Toscano reaching on the fielder's choice. One out later, Yancik drew a walk to load the bases, but Gokel flied to center to end the inning.

In the fourth, Crutchfield walked with one out and went to second on a Grant base hit. Both advanced on a passed ball, and Logan Cromer flew out to right field, where Mikey Klotz made a perfect throw to the catcher to double up Crutchfield trying to score on the play.

The Southsiders drew level in the bottom of the inning, all with one out. Both Brad Hennen and Reid Wilson were hit by pitches, with both runners scoring on Jacob Kopp's double to the right field fence. Nathan Smith drew a walk, and both Kopp and Smith advanced on a wild pitch, but Haltman struck out and Bryce French was caught looking to end the inning.

The Tigers took the lead back in the sixth, with Toscano and Basarich leading off with back-to-back singles. A Yancik walk loaded things up, and Gokel hit a sacrifice fly to center, where the center fielder made a great diving catch. Toscano tagged and scored, while Basarich advanced to third. Two strikeouts ended the inning.

The Southsiders came back with two runs in the bottom of the sixth, both off Grant. With one out, Smith singled and then scored on a Connor Milligan double to right field. Alex McKay came on as a pinch-hitter and promptly doubled to right center to score Milligan with the winning run, the game being called at that point.

Despite the loss, the Tigers competed very well, and it's something Edwardsville takes much pride in.

"Our guys are going to compete," Ohlau said, "whether we're playing in a backyard, in the sandlot, in a cornfield, or on a baseball field., they're going to compete. That's not a question about our guys competing; they're going to come out every day and compete."

In a game played earlier in the day, the Tigers dropped a 5-3 decision to the Southern Illinois Prospects. Wallace, Toscano and Blake Burris each had two hits for the Tigers, while Burris also had two RBIs and Yancik belted a home run in the game.

Overall, things are going along well for the Tigers, and the summer season gives the younger players a chance to shine. And the coaches also have the opportunity to see the players in game conditions and evaluate their progress.

“The summer is more of a proving grounds of sorts,” Ohlau said, “where the guys just come out and play in a more free setting, and they compete real hard. We assess how they’re doing, they have fun, and we leave it at that.

“But I think everything’s going pretty well so far,” Ohlau continued. “I mean, it’s baseball, Summer baseball. I can’t really find too many bad things about that, coming out in the summer and playing baseball with these good young men. Their pleasure to come around on Saturdays and Sundays and be around.”



