

# **Bears open state Legion tourney against host Rantoul today**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE –** The Metro East Bears begin their latest chapter of their quest for the American Legion World Series in mid-August in Shelby, N.C., this evening when the Bears take on host Rantoul in the final game of the first round of the Illinois American Legion state tournament at 5:30 p.m. today.

Play begins at 10:30 a.m. today as First Division champion Arlington Heights of suburban Chicago meets Fourth Division champ Danville, followed by Second Division

champ Barrington, also from suburban Chicago, taking on Third Division champion Peoria at 2 p.m. The tournament concludes at 10:30 a.m. Saturday with the final (with a second game, if needed, set for 2 p.m. Saturday); the winner moves into next week's Great Lakes Regional in Napoleon, Ohio, near Toledo.

“There's going to be some good teams in the tournament,” said Bears general manager Dennis Sharp. “Barrington and Arlington Heights have had good seasons and Danville has had a quality program; we're deep in pitching and we've had some kids who have experience in tournaments like this like Steven Pattan and Storm Coffman (who were with the Bears in last year's Great Lakes Regional at SIU-Edwardsville).

“We've also got kids who were with Edwardsville in their run to the (IHSA Class 4A) state tournament; all the kids who have been through what it's like to try to get to the next level in tournaments. They understand what's going on here.”

The Bears can be successful, in Sharp's view, “if we can take care of the ball and get good pitching. We're built for the deep run; I think we've got a solid chance to move on - we were within an eyelash of getting to the World Series last year (when the Bears got to the final day of the regional and came close to advancing to Shelby).”