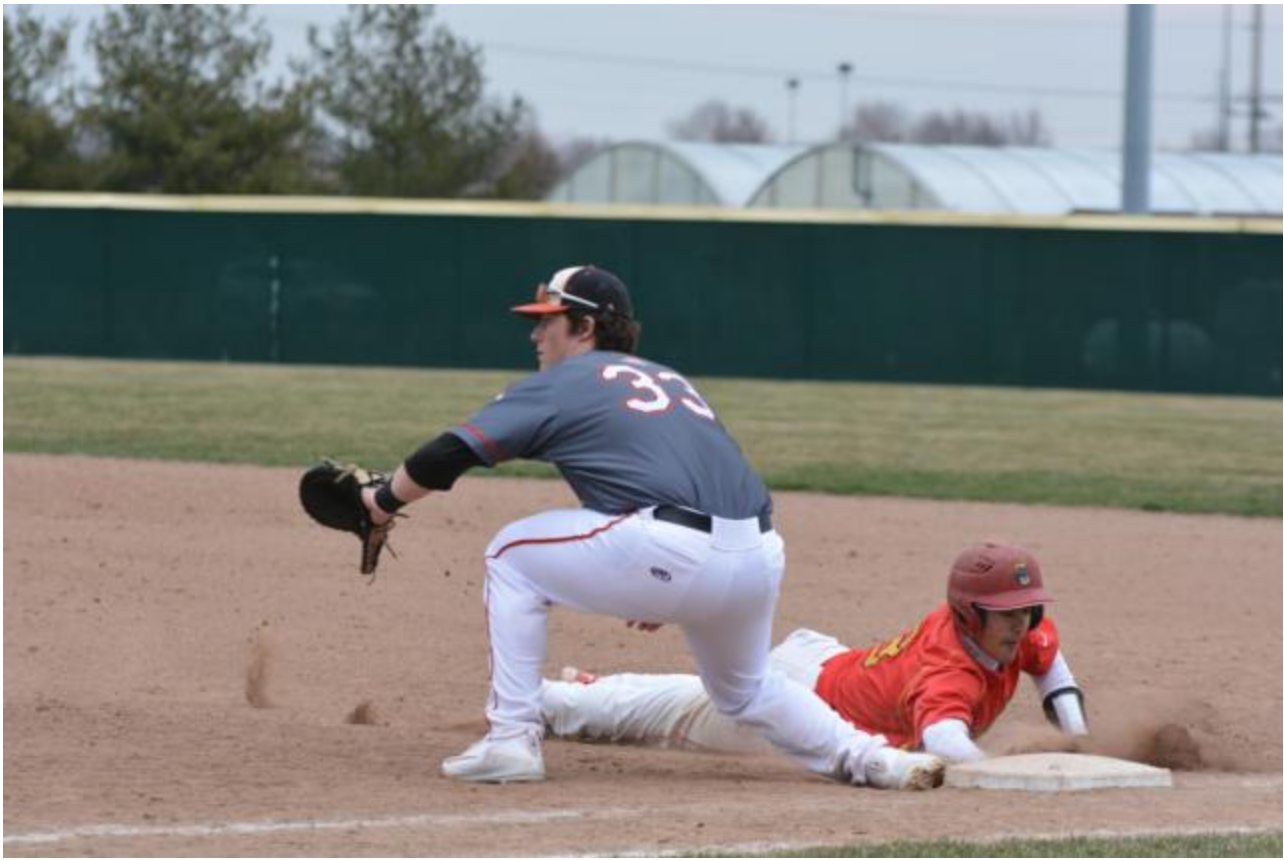


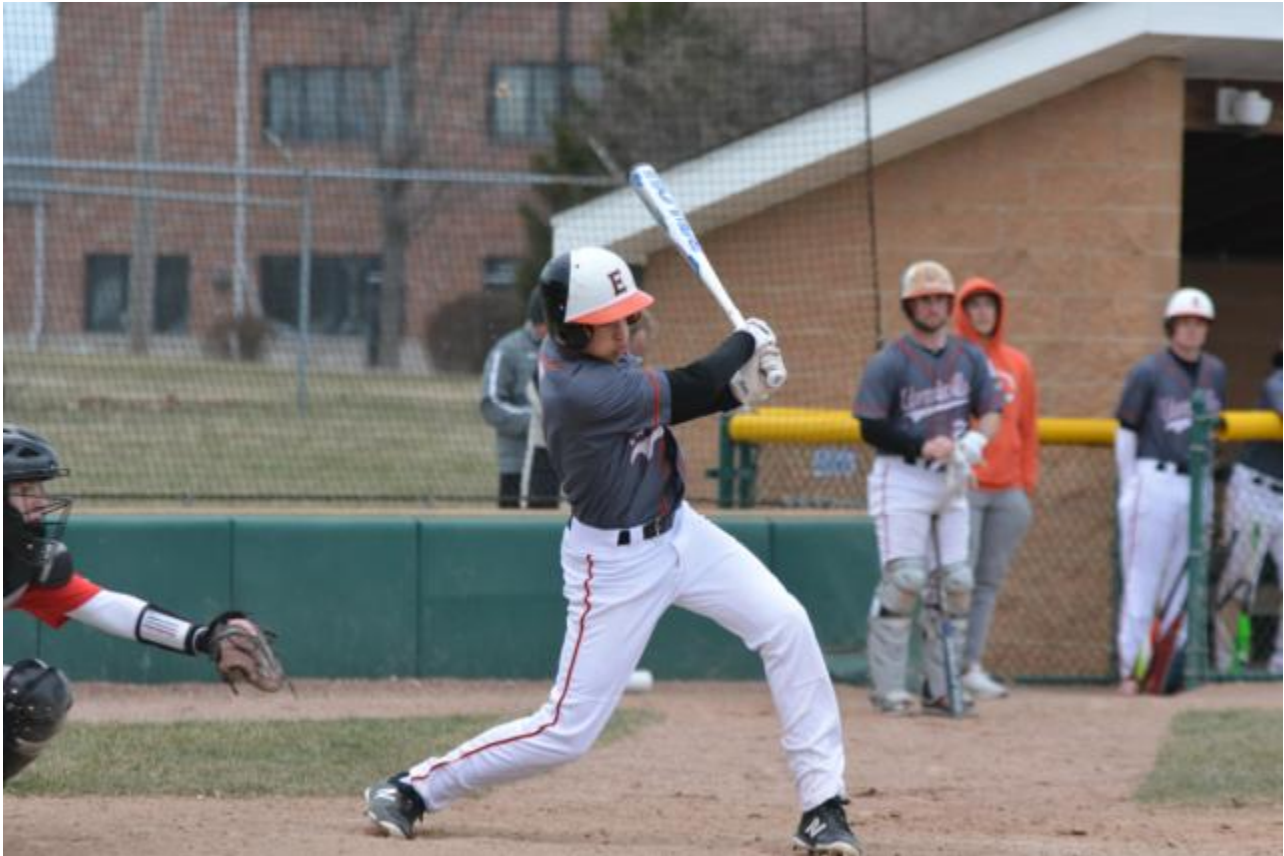
# **Nine-run third, strong pitching, carries Tigers to 11-1 win over Tinley Park**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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EDWARDSVILLE – A nine-run third inning, along with strong pitching from starter Dawson Taylor, helped give Edwardsville's baseball team an 11-1 win over Chicagoland's Tinley Park, in a game shortened to four-and-a-half innings due to the 10-run rule, Friday afternoon at Tom Pile Field.

The game was a part of the Prep Baseball Report Metro-East Kickoff Classic being played this weekend.

The Tigers were able to spray hits around the field while getting the solid performance on the mound in less than ideal conditions; as it was a windy and chilly, overcast day.

“A better offensive day for us,” said Edwardsville coach Tim Funkhouser. “I thought we saw the ball better today, laid off some pitcher pitches, and we got some hitter pitches, or some better pitches for our hitters to hit, and squared some of those balls up. Yesterday was a little tougher sledding for us, and we were pitched to well yesterday, but we also kind of gave away some at-bats.”

The nine-run third came as a result of different players getting key RBI hits, the big blow being a Blake Burris RBI triple over the left fielder that helped break the game wide open.

“A cooler day, the wind blowing a little bit,” Funkhouser said, “and again, early in the season, and you're not counting on balls hitting off the wall or over 'em. And we've got a couple of guys putting some charges in the ball, but it was nice to see guys spray around the field, and continue to produce and stack those at-bats. We tell our guys we are only going to play 35 games, so you'd better value every game, but also, our guys were doing a good job of valuing every at bat they had.”

It was Burris and Drake Westcott that set the table for Edwardsville in the opening inning, getting a single and double respectively to start the Tigers up. Both runners eventually scored to give the Tigers a 2-0 lead, but it was the third where the game was broken open. After the first out, 12 consecutive Tigers reached base, starting when Reid Hendrickson was hit by a pitch. Cole Hampton then drew a walk, and Jack Cooper came through with an RBI single to score Hendrickson. Josh Ohl and Collin Elvers also had key RBIs in the inning before Burris' triple that drove in another run. Before all was said and done, the Tigers scored nine times to take an 11-0 lead.

Meanwhile, starting pitcher Taylor had no trouble with the Titans' lineup, allowing only five base runners in three innings of work, striking out six while conceding only two hits, both third-inning singles to Ryan Zientara and Johnny Gonsalves. Tinley Park got its only run in the fifth, on two singles and an error, but Matt Boyer was able to get the final two outs to preserve the win.

The Burris-Westcott duo at the top of the lineup paid dividends for the Tigers, especially with Westcott hitting in the number two slot.

“Well, we went to it last year, really, with the way it helped out our lineup,” Funkhouser said. “Right now, the thinking is to get (Westcott) as many at-bats we can, and also still have a guy batting in front of him. We'll see how that plays out during the course of the year, but I think right now, that's kind of the course. Like yesterday, he was able to bat a couple more times in innings; he should have been able to bat one more time; we took ourselves out of an inning. . .but he's going to be our staple in our lineup. And the guys around him will be big, supportive roles for that. Every year, we want our lineup as deep as possible.”

And Taylor, despite the conditions, pitched very well.

“You know what, those weren't great conditions to throw in,” Funkhouser said. “A colder day, windy. He was right around the plate, and I thought he threw some breaking pitches for some strikes, too, and really competed well. So we're happy with what Dawson did on the mound for us today.”

The Tigers are scheduled to face New Lenox Lincoln-Way West in a 3 p.m. game on Saturday, and Funkhouser feels that his team is a work in progress.

“We're going to be a work in progress throughout the year,” Funkhouser said. “But early on, just with the way it's been cooler, and then, really we're getting to know our guys, and we got to know our guys in the preseason, but really, we're getting to see what they can do in competition, and then, as that timing comes along, and as the guys that are able to make adjustments quicker in baseball, are able to produce more, So that'll be something that will play itself out as the course of the season goes on. That's what we're kind of searching for.”



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