

Taplin single lifts Tigers past Gillespie in tight game 8-6

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Lauren Taplin came up to bat in the bottom of the sixth of a tie game between Edwardsville and Gillespie at Edwardsville's softball grounds Wednesday afternoon

The Tigers had two on and one out and Taplin stepped up and found a way to lift a single to bring in Anna Burke and Emma Lewis with what proved to be the winning

runs as EHS won their rain-delayed season opener 8-6 over the Miners, dropping Gillespie to 3-1 on the year while the Tigers opened at 1-0.

“We had a tough first inning,” said Tiger coach Lori Blade of an opening frame that saw Edwardsville fall behind 2-0 before the Tigers scored three runs to take the lead. “It's like they jumped on mistakes we made; early on, you kind of expect that, but they're free-swinging kids that can flat-out hit; we just made some mistakes at the plate and they jumped all over them and it cost us a little bit.

“But the kids battled back – we battled enough to take the lead on Taplin's big hit, but I'm really proud of this group for battling back. They got down and battled back to tie it up – we just couldn't get quite over the hump to break it open.”

Edwardsville also took advantage of Gillespie mistakes to grab the lead and then forge a tie in the fifth. “She (Gillespie pitcher Sydney Henricks) walked a few kids and we took advantage of that; I thought we didn't catch a couple of balls that we typically catch, and then we turn around in the late innings and turn a double play with the bases loaded, which is kind of what we expect, to get out of that jam.”

Megan Gorniak threw three innings down the stretch to help the Tigers, getting a 5-2-3 double play in the sixth that cut the heart out of a Miner rally and kept the game tied at 6-6 at the time; Blade also thought Jordyn Henricks, who got the ball to start the game and went four innings, had a good outing as well. “Jordyn threw well too,” Blade said. “She just made a couple of mistakes to the wrong kids; Megan came in and really battled, she missed a couple of spots and got a couple of hits off of her.

“Her location was really pretty good and the off-speed (pitch) is really good for her too.”

Gillespie got on the board first when Rylee Sarti singled in Rylee Jarman, with Sarti then scoring on an error to put the Miners up 2-0; Edwardsville answered back with three in the bottom of the first on RBI singles from Taryn Brown and Lewis that brought in Henricks and Maria Smith, with Taplin reaching on a fielder's choice that scored Burke to put the Tigers ahead at 3-2.

Smith scored on a wild pitch in the second that extended the lead to 4-2, but a pair of two-run homers off Henricks by Keaton Link and Mackenzie Kasarda gave Gillespie a 6-4 lead going into the bottom of the fourth. A Brown sacrifice fly that scored Smith got one of those runs back in the fourth and Mackenzie Owens scored on a Henricks single in the fifth to draw the Tigers even at 6-6.

Burke doubled to open the bottom of the sixth and one out later, Lewis singled to put two on before Taplin stepped up and lifted her game-winning two-RBI single to bring

home the winning runs; Groniak retired the side in order in the seventh to get the win in relief for Henricks.

Smith was 1-for-3 for the Tigers on the day with three runs scored, Henricks 1-for-2 with a run scored, Taplin 1-for-3 with three RBIs, Owens 1-for-2 with a run scored, Brooke Weber 1-for-3, Lewis 2-for-4 with a RBI and run scored, Brown 1-for-2 with a RBI and Burke 2-for-3 with a double and two runs scored. Henricks struck out five for the Tigers while Gorniak fanned three on the day.

Gillespie pounded out multiple hits in the game from various players. Rylee Jarman and Sydney Henrichs had three hits apiece, Mackenzie Kasarda, Keaton Link, Rylee Sarti and Lexie Bussman added two hits.

The Tigers host Breese Mater Dei at 10 a.m. Saturday before hosting Joliet West at noon Saturday before opening Southwestern Conference play at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday against Granite City at Wilson Park/George Sykes Field.



