

Burke goes four-for-four, Lewis hits three-run homer as Tigers top Eagles 7-5

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – A pair of seniors helped show the way, as shortstop Anna Burke went four-for-four with a RBI and second baseman Emma Lewis hit a three-run homer as part of a four-run second inning to help Edwardsville defeat Civic Memorial 7-5 in a softball game Saturday morning at the Edwardsville Sports Complex.

The Tigers 16-3 on the season, while the Eagles dropped to 11-15 as both schools enter the final week of the regular season.

The Eagles kept battling throughout the game, but Edwardsville was able to hold off CM.

“We definitely found a way to get it done,” said Tiger assistant coach Caty Ponce. “It wasn't pretty, but came through with some big hits and were able to score runners.”

The Tigers had 10 hits on the day, in addition to both Lewis' and Burke's performances, and Ponce thinks that her team is starting to focus more at the plate, leading to opportunities.

“They're starting to focus a little bit more at the plate,” Ponce said, “and hitting better pitches, which is a good thing. So, it's hard enough to hit good pitches than it is bad pitches, so pitch selection has been a good thing for those two.”

The Eagles have battled the entire season, which has been the trademark of the team, and that spirit was on display throughout the game.

“These girls have battled all year,” said CM coach Luke Angelo, “and they don't quit, and that's one thing they take pride in, is they're in every game they're in until the very end, and that's how it was today. We had a lot of opportunities, and we just didn't capitalize on them.”

Sophomore shortstop Jenna Christeson was a big catalyst for the Eagles. Christeson was one-for-two with two walks, and scored three runs for CM.

“Jenna had a great performance,” Angelo said. “Jenna's our little bus driver, you know. She gets on base and makes things happen with our speed, and anytime she's on base, she's in a position to score. So, yeah, she had a great game, and like I said, we were in it until the end.”

The Eagles got on the board in the opening inning, starting with a Christeson single. Christeson was sacrificed to second by Cassie Reed, and scored one out later on Rebecca Harkey's RBI single. Edwardsville took the lead in the second, all the runs coming with two out. After walks to Taryn Brown and Jordyn Henricks, Lauren Taplin

doubled home Brown to tie the game, and Lewis came up and hit the second pitch over the left-center field fence for a home run to give the Tigers a 4-1 lead.

The Eagles were able to cut the lead in the third without benefit of a hit. Christeson, Reed and Susan Buchanan lead off the inning with walks, and Harkey was safe on an error by the first baseman, Christeson scoring and keeping the bases loaded. Pitcher Kaitlynn Wrenn's sacrifice fly to center scored Reed to cut the lead to 4-3. Kate Griffith then flew out to Taplin in center, who's throw to third doubled off Buchanan, ending the inning.

Edwardsville restored their three-run lead in the bottom of the inning, starting with a lead off single from Brown. Mackenzie Owens sacrificed Brown to second, and went to third on a Henricks single. Henricks then stole second, and when the catcher threw to third to pick off Brown, the throw got away, allowing Brown to score and Henricks to go to third. Henricks then scored on a Brooke Webber ground out to short, giving the Tigers a 6-3 lead.

Undaunted, CM promptly cut the lead back to 6-5. After Gracie Braun was hit by a pitch to start the fourth, Ally Hardy struck out, and Malena Wade reached on a fielder's choice when Braun was forced at second. A Christeson single and walk to Reed loaded the bases. Buchanan then hit a roller in front of the plate that she beat out for a RBI single, scoring Wade, and the throw got away, allowing Christeson to score, cutting the lead to one. A Harkey grounder back to the box ended the inning.

Ponce gave the Eagles much credit.

“They put runners on, no matter what it was,” Ponce said, “and they pressed the whole game and put us in situations to make plays, which is good for us to see coming near the post season But we've just got to execute a little bit better.”

Edwardsville got an insurance run in the bottom of the sixth, as Taplin walked, was sacrificed to second by Lewis, and Burke connected on a double to the left-center field fence, scoring Taplin with the game's final run. Meghan Gorniak retired nine of the final 10 Eagle batters, including the final seven in a row, to record the win.

The Eagles' final three regular season games all happen in a 72-hour span, hosting Freeburg on Monday and going to Columbia on Tuesday and Belleville East on Wednesday before hosting Mascoutah in the IHSA Class 3A regional May 22. Angelo likes the direction his club is going as the post season approaches.

“Well, I like today,” Angelo said, “I like the fact it was 7-5, and I like the fact that there was no quit. We have Freeburg on Monday, Columbia Tuesday, Belleville East on

Wednesday. So there's three more tough games going into our regional, where we battle Mascoutah, who, you know, they've beat us twice in the regular season. I like the direction we're heading.”

The Tigers will have a busy final week of the regular season themselves, playing at Highland on Monday and O'Fallon on Tuesday before finishing up at home against Collinsville on Thursday and Waterloo on Friday before facing Springfield High in the Alton Regional May 22. And with the playoffs coming, Ponce feels the Tigers will be ready to go, but also knows there's always chances to improve.

“We still have some room to improve,” Ponce said, “so, I'll be happy to see how we are two weeks from now.”

And of course, in the post season, anything can happen.

“Of course,” Ponce said with a smile. “Gotta take them one game at a time.”





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