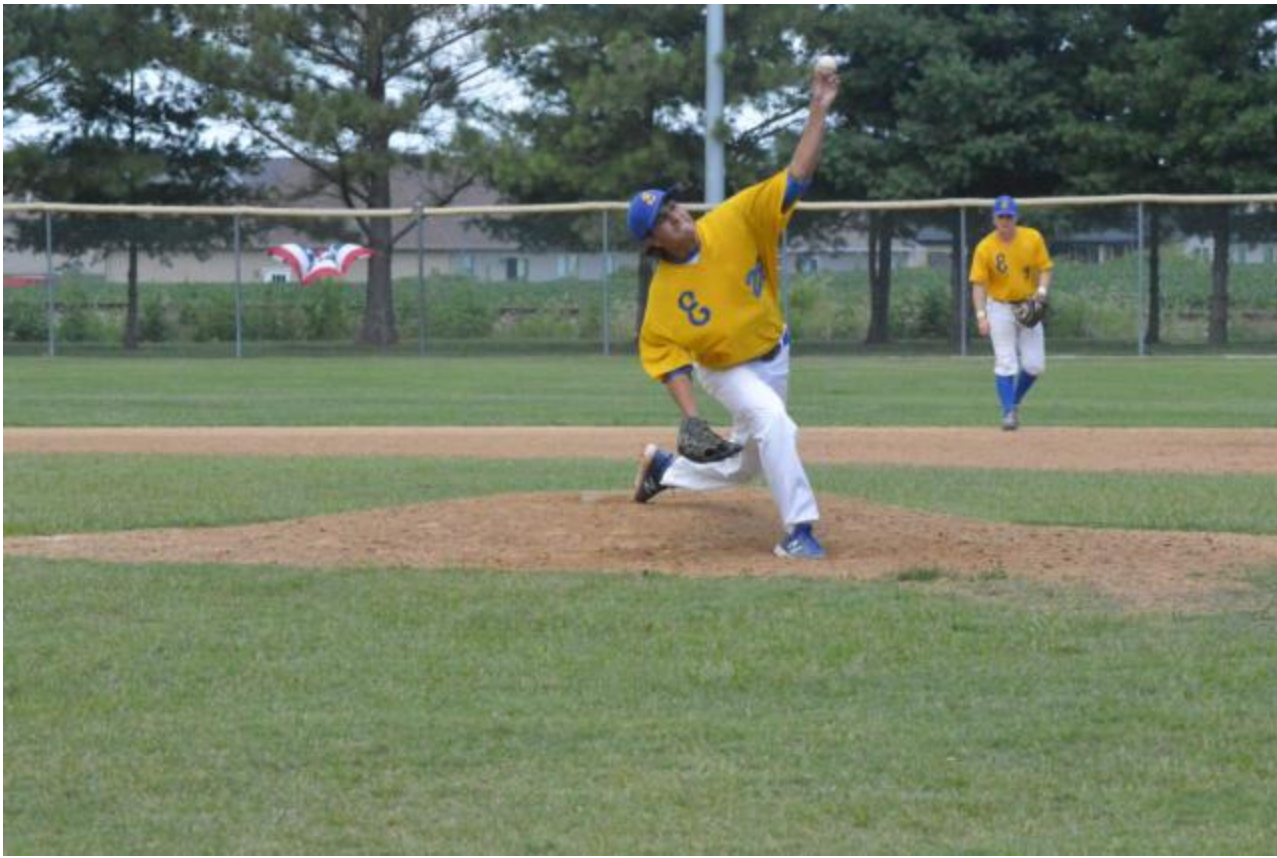


# Edwardsville falls to Salem 2-1, relegated to Fifth Division loser's bracket

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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AVISTON – The opportunities were there, but Edwardsville American Legion Post 199’s baseball team couldn’t take advantage of them.

Edwardsville could only get a first-inning run from Tate Wargo Sunday afternoon as they dropped a 2-1, eight-inning decision to Salem Post 128 in Post 199’s opening game of the Illinois American Legion Fifth Division tournament at Aviston City Park, forcing the Legionnaires to have to go through the loser’s bracket to advance to next weekend’s Illinois state tournament in Alton.

Edwardsville will meet Carmi, 2-0 winners Sunday evening over Steeleville in an elimination game, at 3 p.m. today in an elimination game; should Edwardsville win Monday, they would have to win two games Tuesday to get to the championship round and then win again twice Wednesday to get to the state tournament.

“We had opportunities to score; we had guys in scoring position,” said Edwardsville manager Ken Schaake. “We had hitters up there that should be able to make contact even if we just need a fly ball or a ground ball, and we didn’t get it. We had our opportunities and we didn’t take advantage of them.

“Our pitching did a great job; Brandon Hampton worked out of a couple of jams and Chase (Gockel, who came in to pitch in the eighth) did OK. It’s unfortunate that he gets

the first two, then we get an error and they steal – they stole a couple of bases today and that’s how they score.”

Schaake felt that a team that scores just two runs shouldn’t defeat Edwardsville. “That’s what I told them (after the game) – two runs should not beat this team; we had our opportunities and we just did not take advantage of them,” Schaake said. “I thought perhaps we weren’t as focused each time we were up at the plate, where there were guys in scoring position or not; we were a little too anxious, tried to hit the ball a little too hard.”

Sunday’s weather, while comfortable, was a little windier than might have been expected. “In weather like this, you hit it up in the air and it’s not going anywhere,” Schaake said. “It just didn’t work out; we made a couple of really good plays on the field too, which should have led to some momentum, but for whatever reason, every time, we couldn’t keep things going.”

Edwardsville didn’t waste much time getting on top; Wargo led off the bottom of the first with a walk and stole second, which was followed by groundouts by Mikey Hampton and Joel Quirin that scored Wargo; the score remained there until the top of the fourth, when Trevor Markley led off with a walk and advanced on a Hunter Brandt single; Trevor Cummins was then hit by a pitch to load the bases. One out later, a botched fielder’s choice allowed Issak Hays to reach base and score Markley to tie the game up a 1-1; Brandon Hampton then got the next two hitters to keep things even.

Edwardsville had one chance in the bottom of the fourth when Max Schreiber singled with two out and Reid Hendrickson and Will Messer drew walks to load the bases but couldn’t get a run home; Edwardsville couldn’t get much going after that while Brandon Hampton and the Post 199 defense kept Salem shut down.

Salem’s winning run came in the top of the eighth, with Gockel on the mound; he struck out the first two batters before Hays reached on an error and stole second, then came around to score on a Ryan Matheny RBI single. Edwardsville did get a runner on base in the bottom of the eighth when Quirin singled, but Matheny, who came in to pitch in the seventh for Salem, retired Gockel to end the game.

Hendrickson, Schreiber, Konnar Loewen and Quirin each had hits on the day for Edwardsville; Brandon Hampton went seven innings on the mound and struck out five.

“I told them they can let this eat them up today, but it’s baseball; everything starts over tomorrow at 0-0,” Schaake said. “Come out ready to play and be focused from the time we step on the field, every at-bat, every play on the field, every pitch.”

In Sunday's other game, Newton advanced to the winner's bracket final with a 5-4 win over host Aviston; following today's Edwardsville-Carmi game, Orient Post 1961 meets Aviston in an elimination game at 5:30 p.m. while Salem and Newton clash at 8 p.m. to decide who advances to Wednesday's championship round.