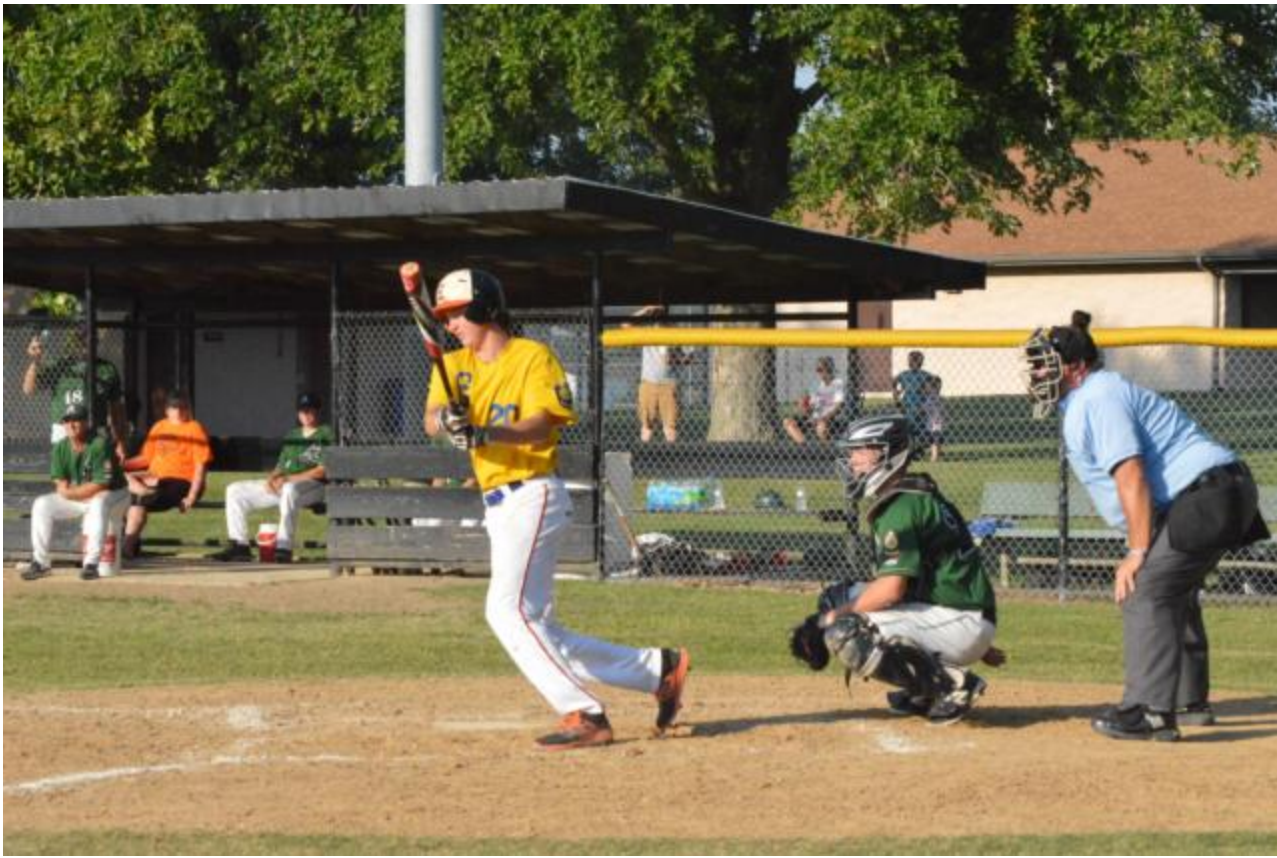




Fifth-inning Salem outburst sends Edwardsville's Legionnaires out of Fifth Division Tournament

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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AVISTON – Edwardsville’s American Legion Post 199 baseball team knew that it was going to be a difficult proposition to go through the loser’s bracket to reach the Illinois state Legion tournament this weekend in Alton.

The Legionnaires won their first game Tuesday evening as Andrew Yancik threw a two-hit shutout to eliminate tournament host Aviston 6-0 to move on in the tournament, but the second inning of their game against Salem – who had defeated them 2-1 in eight innings in their Sunday afternoon opener – turned out to be the proverbial bridge too far for Post 199.

Salem pushed across five runs in the bottom of the second, an outburst that included a two-run homer from Trevor Cummins, that – despite a rally in the top of the seventh – sent Edwardsville out of the tournament 5-2 in Tuesday’s late game and sent Salem into tonight’s championship round against Newton.

Post 199 was eliminated with a 28-7 mark for the summer, while tonight’s Newton-Salem winner moves into this weekend’s state tournament at Alton’s Redbird Field, with the state champion moving into the Legion Great Lakes Regional Aug. 8-12 in Napoleon, Ohio.

“Some of the balls we hit hard just didn’t find a hole, their shortstop made some good plays; it just didn’t work out,” said Post 199 manager Ken Schaake. “We had the opportunities that we just didn’t take advantage of and the one bad inning that we had, they took full advantage of the opportunities that we gave them.

“We made a couple of errors that led to a couple of runs; still, we should have done better offensively. Still, we had the tying run coming to the plate in the last inning – it just didn’t work out.”

Issac Garrett got the ball for the Salem rematch; Garrett actually threw well, facing only 13 batters the final four innings, conceding just two hits and getting a double play. “He made a couple of bad pitches,” Schaake said. “He left a ball on the inner half (of the plate) to the right fielder (Cummins), then started getting the ball up with two strikes and they just went with the pitch. I can’t really complain there; their pitcher (Nate Roth) threw strikes. Unfortunately, when we hit the ball, it didn’t fall in like it did before.”

Against Aviston, Edwardsville scored once in the first three innings thanks to a Reid Hendrickson RBI single that brought in Tate Wargo in the first, a solo shot to left-center field from Cole Hampton and an RBI double from Alex Schreiber that drove in Hendrickson in the third to put Post 199 in control; Edwardsville then put the game away with a three-run top of the seventh that was highlighted by a two-run double from Joel Quirin and a run-scoring Alex Schreiber single that upped the lead to 6-0.

Andrew Yancik got the ball for the opener and struck out six for the game, allowing only two Aviston runners to reach second in the contest; Wargo drew two walks and scored twice for Edwardsville, with Mikey Hampton scoring once, Quirin 2-for-4 with a double and two RBIs, Hendrickson 2-for-3 with a double and RBI, Schreiber 3-for-4 with a double and two RBIs, Chase Gockel 1-for-4 and Cole Hampton 2-for-4 with a homer and double, run scored and an RBI.

Edwardsville’s seventh-inning rally against Salem included a two-run double from Konnar Loewen that brought in Schreiber and Will Messer; Wargo singled following Loewen’s double to keep Post 199’s hopes alive, but a Roth strikeout send Edwardsville out of the tournament.

Wargo was 2-for-4 for Post 199 in the nightcap, with Quirin 1-for-3, Hendrickson 1-for-3, Schreiber a run scored, Gockel 1-for-3, Messer three walks and a run scored and Loewen 1-for-3 with a double and two RBIs. Garrett went the distance in taking the loss, striking out three on the night.

“They’re a good group of kids,” Schaake said of his team. “We needed to play our game the way we had played all year long, and unfortunately, for whatever reason, we had a few innings in the tournament here where we didn’t play our best baseball, whether it was offensively or defensively.”

One thing that Schaake will remember of this summer’s team is this – that they kept competing, no matter what the situation was throughout the course of the season. “They competed – whoever was out there, they would compete; they never laid over for anybody,” Schaake said. “I told them (after the second game) they were a team; there was no factions within the team, there was no criticism when someone would make a mistake – they were there to build each other up. I saw it in the dugout tonight - ‘don’t worry about it, it’s over with, let’s go’ - something like that to various kids.

“That says something and that’s what I told them – whether it’s in baseball, your job, when you’re a parent – you gotta work with somebody, whether it’s your wife on in the family, your co-workers at work, you can’t rely on yourself to get everything done and accomplished, you have to utilize your teammates and that was the one thing I thought that they did. They were a definite team.”

