

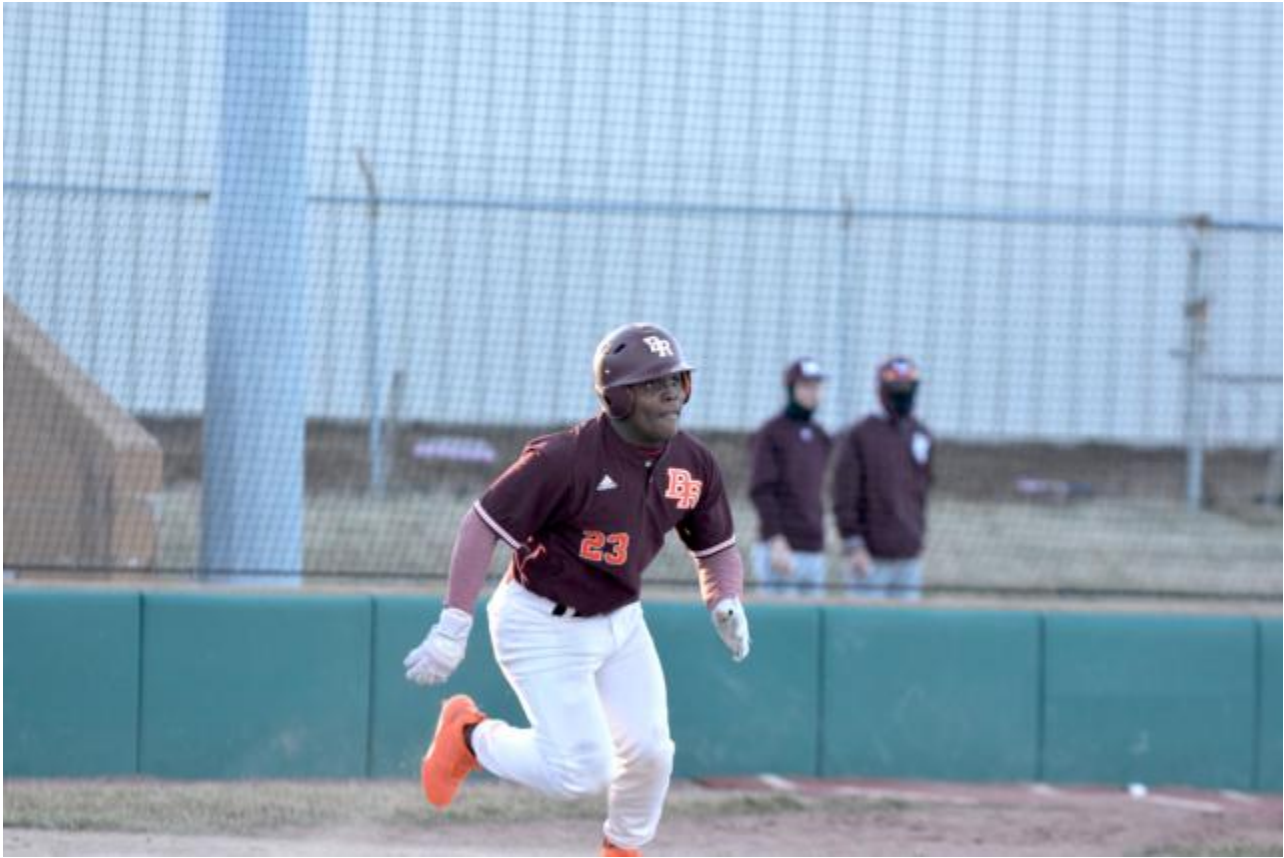
# Eight-Run Seventh Gives Brother Rice 11-4 Baseball Win Over Edwardsville

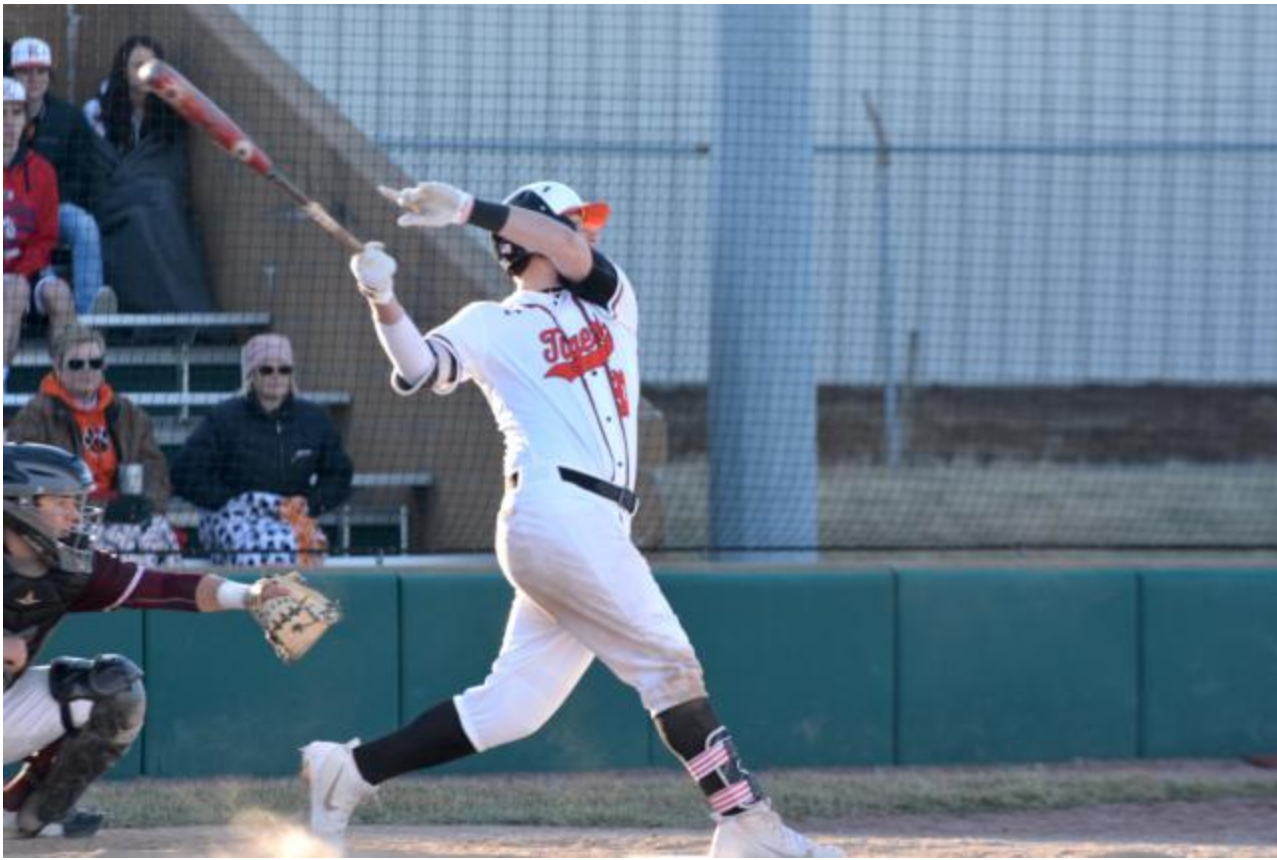
by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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EDWARDSVILLE – The Edwardsville baseball team had a chance to put away Chicago Brother Rice in the bottom of the sixth of their game Friday evening in the PBR Metro-East Kickoff Classic at Tom Pile Field, but couldn't.

The Crusaders took full advantage in the top of the seventh with eight runs as Brother Rice defeated the Tigers 11-4. Edwardsville had led nearly the entire game before Rice exploded.

“Yeah. Boy, you’ve got the bases loaded, you’ve got three-four-five up, and we just needed one little thing,” said Tigers coach Tim Funkhouser, “and we’re sitting right on the time limit, and wherever it sat there, we needed to execute within that inning. And we’ve had a couple of innings in this early season where we really had a chance to bury teams, and kind of opened up the window. And today, they took full advantage. You saw the club they really can be once they got their rhythm, and they can play the game. And they stepped on our throat.”

The Crusaders had threatened most of the game before the seventh.

“Yeah, you hope that time doesn’t come, and the same token for us,” Funkhouser said. “We hit some balls hard with runners in scoring position early that could have helped us out, and we had some bad baseball up there. And they hit a jam shot, a little flare. But I

think the things that you can control are most things; we just needed to make some plays defensively. We gave them too much there, and then offensively, we didn't execute at the plate, especially with runners in scoring position. That always plays a big role in the game."

There was a time limit of two hours and fifteen minutes for each game, and the game had almost reached its limit when the Crusaders came up for the top of the seventh. And an innocent play, a lead-off bunt single, opened the floodgates.

"It rolled down, laid down a nice bunt, and we didn't make a play," Funkhouser said. "And that kind of allowed the inning to start reeling. But I really just look at the things we can control, and we didn't do the things defensively and at the plate, and it made a big difference today."

The time limit was very close when the Tigers batted in the bottom of the sixth, but their failure to execute played a big part in the game continuing.

"It's one of those things," Funkhouser said. "It's a two hour, 15-minute time limit, whether it was 6:59 or 7:01, I just didn't want to put ourselves in that situation. And with the bases loaded in there, we don't deserve to win if we can't bury it there," he said with a laugh. "So if we do anything in that inning, it's extended and the game's over, and we're not talking about it. But I told our guys that that shouldn't burn any energy whether it's a minute off or whatever."

Rice started out with a threat in the opening inning when Tiger starter Jonathon Yancik hit three of the first five batters with pitches to load the bases, but got out of the inning by striking out Danny Doligale. Edwardsville took the lead in the bottom of the inning as Hayden Moore and Blake Burris drew walks, advanced on a fly ball by Drake Westcott, and Moore scored on Jack Cooper's sacrifice fly to center. The Tigers extended their lead in the fourth, starting with Max Ringering reaching on an error. Lou Latino was brought in to replace starter Brandon Laux and got Collin Salter to ground into a fielder's choice, with Ringering out at third. Joe Toscano and Joe Copeland singled to load the bases, and a Moore RBI single scored Salter. Burris hit a grounder back to the box, but an error allowed Toscano to score, and a sacrifice fly to left by Drake Westcott plated Copeland and made it 4-0.

Yancik pitched out of another bases-loaded situation in the third, and in the fourth, Gavin Huebner came in and set down the Crusaders, but in the fifth, with one out, Jack Payton and Benji Brokemon singled, and Ryan Maher walked. Huebner struck out Doligale, but Marquis Jackson cleared the bases with a double to the fence in right to cut the lead to 4-3. Jackson then went to third on a wild pitch and Nolan McQuillan walked, but Zac Crutchfield came in and fanned Mike Hopkins to end the inning.

Huebner pitched very well despite the fifth inning troubles.

“Yeah, I think he’s going to do well for us,” Funkhouser said. “He really loves to compete, he’s got good stuff, he’s a great kid who loves the game of baseball, loves competing, and he’s a great teammate too.”

Copeland started the Edwardsville sixth with a double and went to third on a single by Moore, who stole second. Burris drew a walk to load the bases, but Westcott struck out, Cooper fouled out to the first baseman, who made a nice sliding catch, and Dalton Wallace was called out on strikes to end the threat.

The Crusader seventh began innocently enough when Jackson laid down a bunt single down the third base line to reach. McQuillan then singled, and both runners executed a double steal perfectly. Kendall Pettis singled home the tying run, and Rice took the lead when Mike Boston reached on a fielder’s choice, with McQuillan beating the throw to the plate. A Payton sacrifice fly to right scored Pettis, and Brokemond hit a two-run homer over the right-center field fence to extend the Crusader lead to 8-4. Maher then walked, which brought in Grayson Slagle to pitch. Maher stole second and came when another Tiger error allowed Colin Campbell to reach. Jackson then homered over the right field fence to make the score 11-4, and Sebastian Brown retired the Tigers in the bottom of the inning to preserve Rice’s win.

Edwardsville is now 1-1 on the young season and faces Naperville Neuqua Valley on Saturday. Funkhouser knows his team will bounce back and be ready to go.

“They’re always a great baseball program, and it’s bounce back time,” Funkhouser said. “The beauty of baseball is you get a chance to go at it and do it again next time, and we’ll take away the things we didn’t do as well, and hope that carries on.”





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