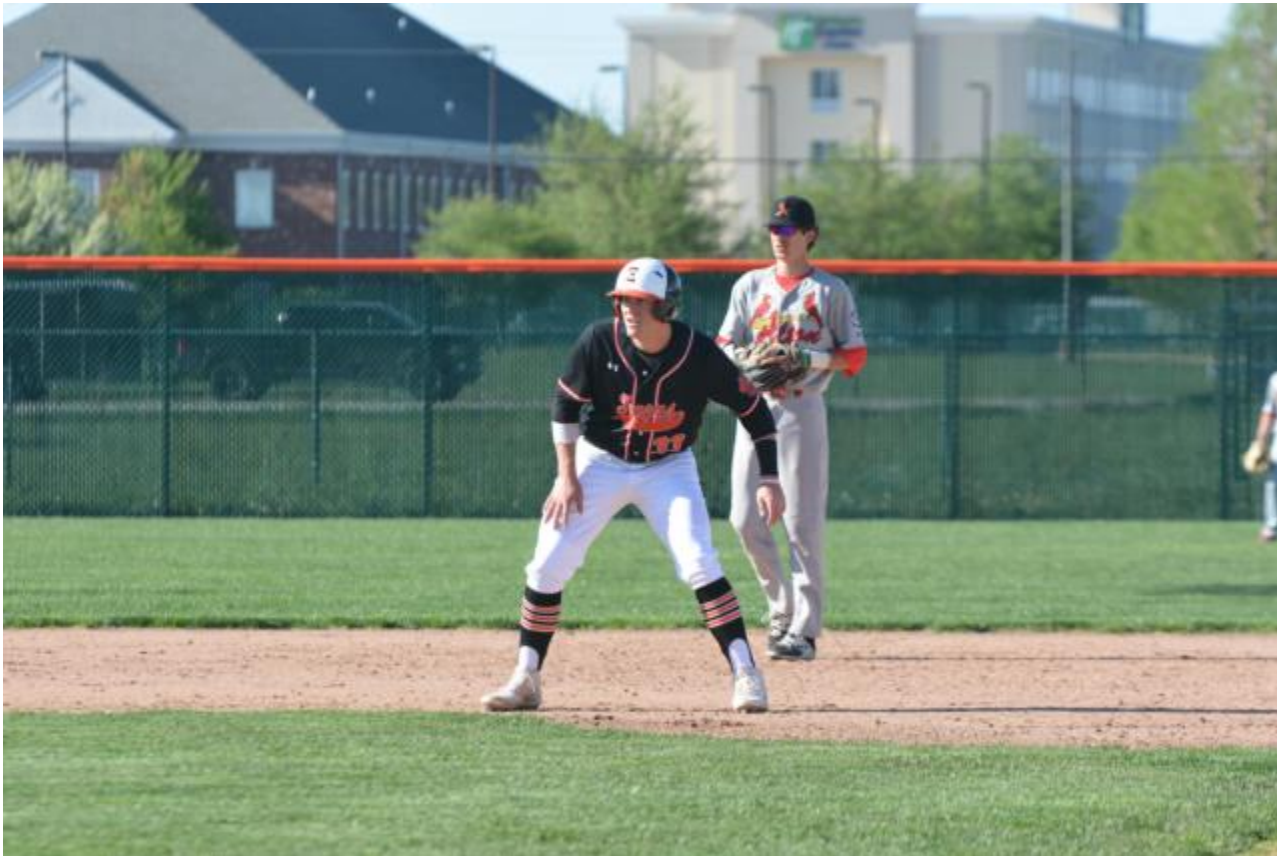


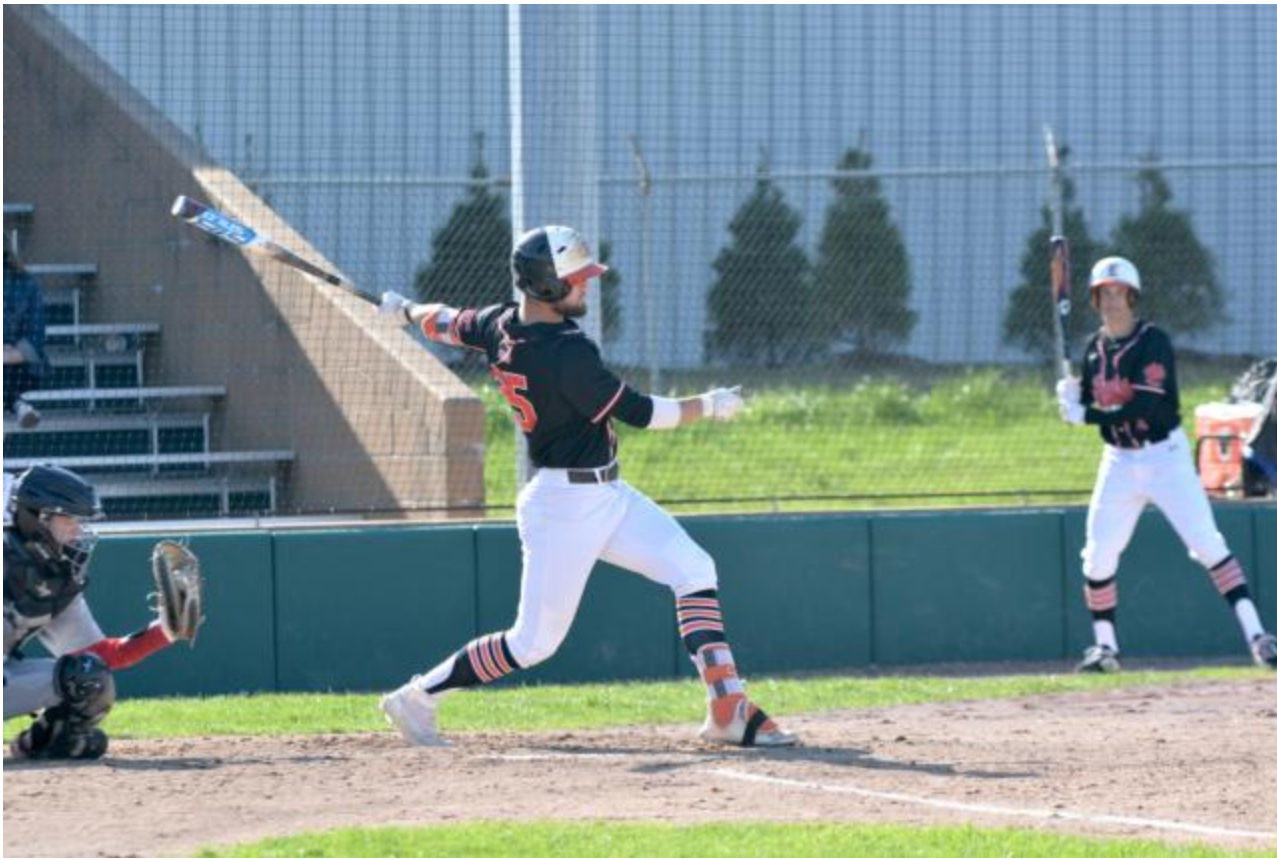


Tigers Nip Redbirds 6-5 in Tight Rival Baseball Matchup at Edwardsville

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
April 27 2019 7:18 AM







EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville scored a total of five runs in the final three innings, including the winning run in the bottom of the seventh to give the Tigers a 6-5 win over Alton in a Southwestern Conference game Friday afternoon at Tom Pile Field.

The Tigers rallied twice from a 3-1 deficit to score three times in the fifth inning, then traded runs in both the sixth and seventh innings to gain the win.

The Tigers rallied twice from a 3-1 deficit to score three times in the fifth inning, then traded runs in both the sixth and seventh innings to gain the win.

Both teams fought and competed hard, but both teams also had mistakes that led to runs that ultimately made the difference.

“Yeah, we had a couple of miscues in the first couple of innings, a couple of baserunning miscues,” said Edwardsville assistant coach Craig Ohlau. “And when you’re playing a good team, like Alton is, you’ve got to take advantage of every single little thing that they give you. And if not, it’s going to come down to the end, down to the wire, just like it did. And we were just kind of lucky there at the end to pull it out.”

As it is in most other sports, it’s paying attention to and taking care of the little things that make the biggest difference In the game.

“Yeah, we’ve got to keep paying attention to the details,” Ohlau said. “We’ve got to keep valuing every single pitch and every single at-bat, and every single play in the field. And when you play pitch-by-pitch, and look at the game through that fine focus, good things will happen. But when you lose your focus, you saw out of the field today that’s going to be a little different outcome, a little harder to get that win.”

The Tigers were able to rally back in the fifth with three runs, the lead run coming courtesy of a balk, then taking advantage of breaks that came their way late.

“Baseball is a game of breaks, and taking advantage of those breaks,” Ohlau said, “and we came out on the right side of the breaks today.”

The Redbirds know that they can compete with other teams, and kept battling throughout against the Tigers.

“Yeah, I’m happy with the competition, for sure,” said Alton head coach Scott Harper. “We know we can compete, just, unfortunately, we gave them enough runs to be able to come back and get us. So, hard-fought game, one we probably should have been to get.”

Redbird starting pitcher Riley Phillips pitched brilliantly throughout the game, striking out eight, and is also swinging a hot bat, getting key hits at opportune times.

“Yeah, he’s coming through,” Harper said. “He’s a real good player for us, and doing the things that can help contribute to the team, along with everybody. It was up and down the lineup; we had some big hits there to come back twice and tie it. But he had a good outing. Need to be a little more efficient, be able to throw a few more strikes to help him keep himself out of tough situations with walks and stolen bases.”

Although Alton was able to rally back to tie the game twice after giving up the lead in the fifth, they didn’t quite get over the hump.

“Oh, it does,” Harper said. “We were able to get a couple of big hits that we needed, just making things happen to where we create the ties both times to come back after we got behind. We just got to keep fighting, just need that one more hit.”

Alton got started on the right foot in the opening inning, starting with Dylan Lahue being hit by a pitch, followed by Robby Taul drawing a walk. Phillips and Adam Stilts both struck out, but Jackson Brooks scored on an error to score Lahue with the game’s first run.

Edwardsville wasted no time in immediately tying the game. Hayden Moore drew a walk, and after a strikeout and intentional walk to Drake Westcott, Moore stole third and came in when the catcher threw wildly into left field, tying the game up at 1-1.

The Redbirds took the lead back in the third, starting with one out. Robby Taul was hit by a pitch and was singled to second by Phillips. Both scored on a double to right by Stilts, but Stilts was thrown out at third by the right fielder trying to stretch the double.

Alton then had a chance to extend its lead in the fifth, when with Collin Salter pitching, singles by Taul and Stilts put runners on first and second, but Brooks grounded to third to end the threat.

Edwardsville then took the lead in the bottom of the inning, starting with a Moore double over the left fielders head, and after a Blake Burris popout to first, Moore stole third and came in on a wild pitch to make it 3-2. Westcott was again intentionally walked, and after a Max Ringer strikeout, Phillips faked a throw first, which is a balk. The balk allowed Westcott to score and Josh Ohl, who had walked, go to second, tying the game at 3-3. Ohl then stole third, and after a Joe Copeland walk, Joe Toscano singled home Ohl to put the Tigers ahead for the first time at 4-3. Dalton Wallace struck out to end the inning.

In the Alton sixth, Preston Schepers opened the inning by reaching on a dropped fly ball by the left fielder, was sacrificed to third by Owen Stendebach, and scored on a base hit by Nathan Lemons. Leo Taul hit into a double play to end the inning, and in the bottom of the frame, Moore led off with a double, Burris singled to put runners on the corners, and Westcott was again intentionally walked to load the bases. Max Ringer hit into a fielder's choice, forcing Burris at third, but allowing Moore to score the lead run to make it 5-4 for Edwardsville after six.

With one out in the top of the seventh, back-to-back singles by Robby Taul and Phillips gave the Redbirds another opportunity, with both runners advancing on a wild pitch. One out later, Brooks reached on an error by the third baseman to draw Alton level again at 5-5, with Phillips taking third. An infield single by Schepers loaded the bases, but Stendebach was called out on strikes to end the inning.

In the bottom of the seventh, with one out, Toscano singled and stole second to get things going for the Tigers, and after a strikeout, Logan Cromer reached when the third baseman fumbled the ball, allowing Toscano to come across with the winning run, giving the Tigers the 6-5 win.

Alton is now 10-11 on the year and hosts Valmeyer in an 11 a.m. first pitch on Saturday, then travels to Waterloo Gibault Catholic Monday afternoon in a 4:30 p.m. start. With the stretch run of the season coming, Harper likes his team's outlook and chances.

"Well, we've shown that we can compete with anybody, it doesn't show it necessarily on the record," Harper said, "win-loss stuff. But you play good competition, and we come to compete each day, so we'll continue to do that."

The Tigers went to 18-3 with a game later that night against Civic Memorial, and Ohlau knows that the Tigers will continue to compete and play hard in every game.

"We'll just continue to play the game, continue to play pitch-by-pitch," Ohlau said. "And just keep valuing at-bats, keep valuing everything we do."

