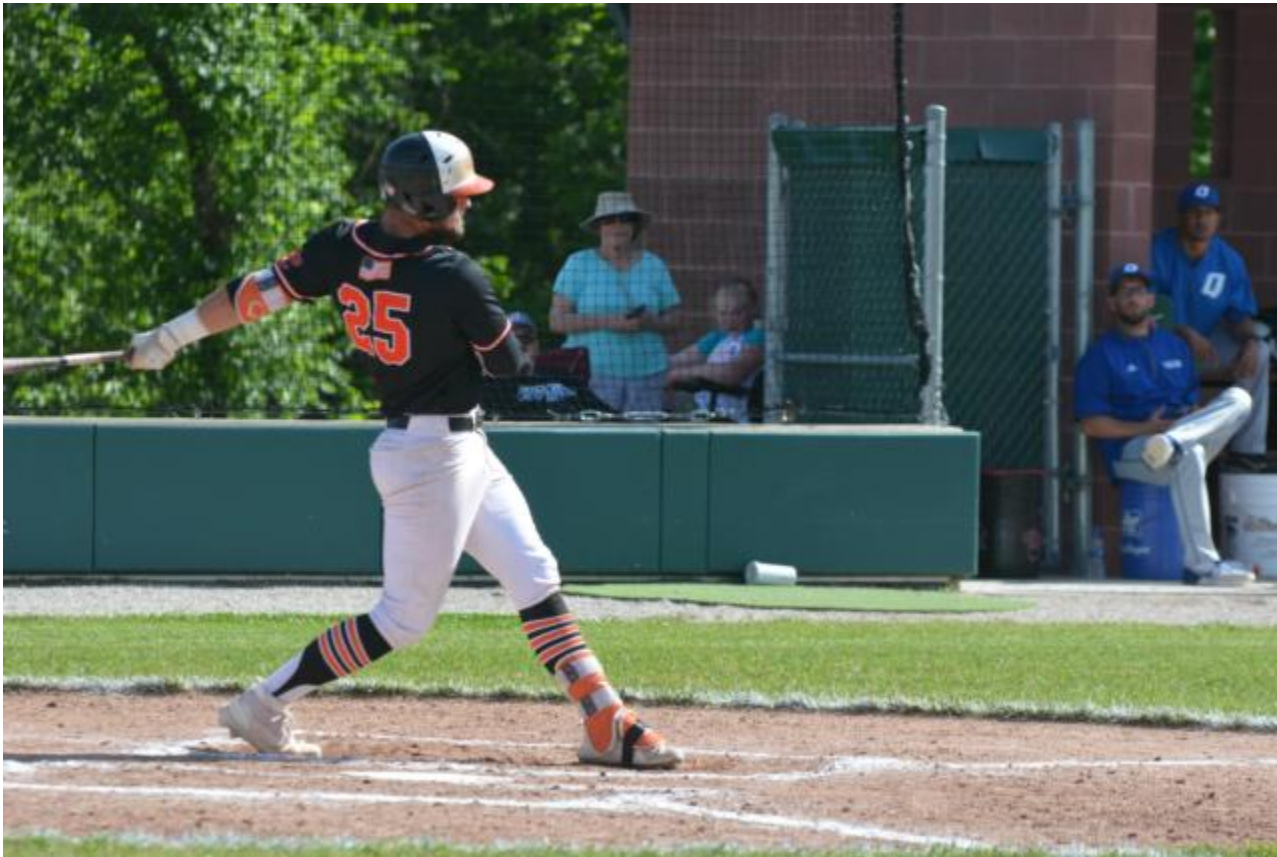
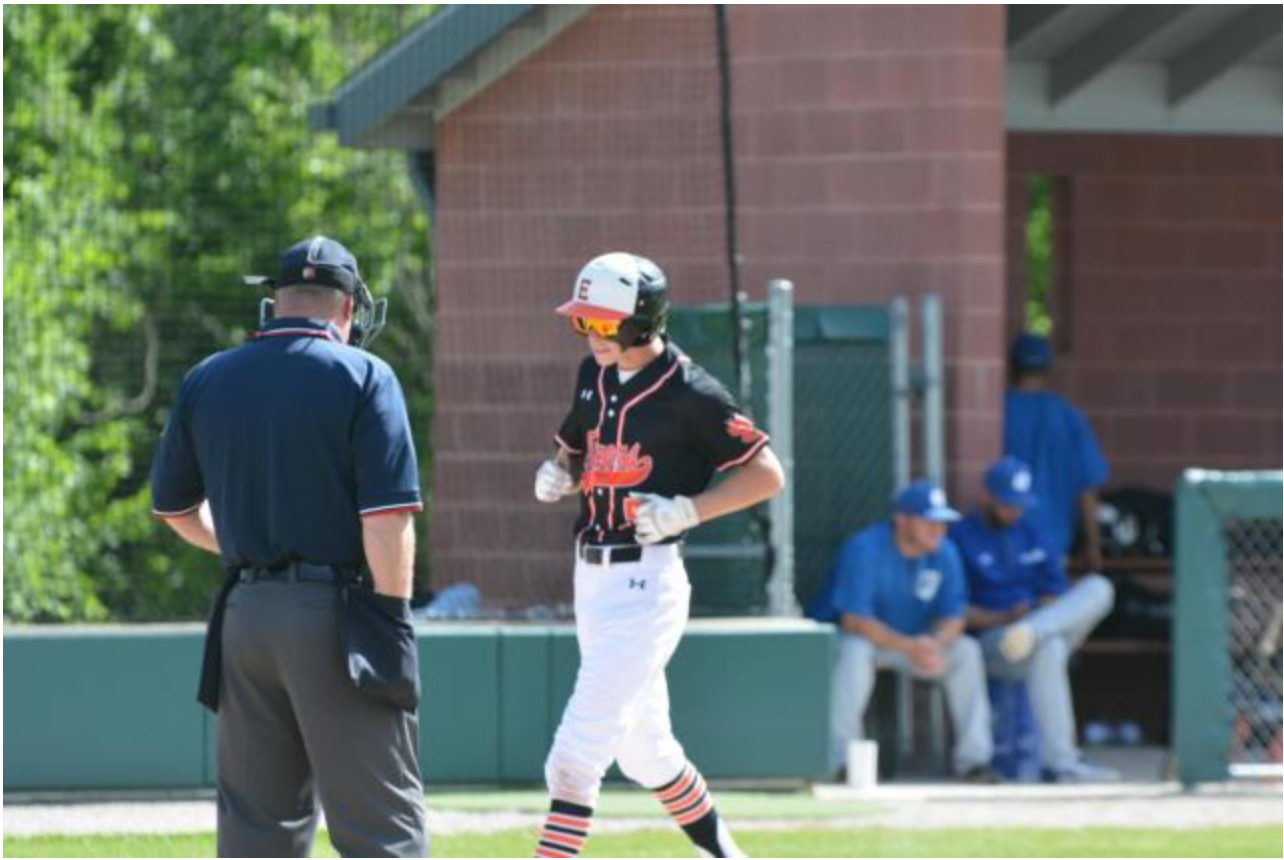


Tigers Score Five In First, Schaefer Fans Six As Tigers Win Over Blue Devils 11-1, Advance To Regional Final

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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ALTON – The Edwardsville High baseball team scored five times in the first inning, and pitcher Grant Schaefer threw a complete game, scattering four hits and striking out six as the Tigers eliminated Quincy 11-1 in the semifinals of the IHSA Class 4A regional Wednesday afternoon at Alton High's Redbird Field.

Edwardsville advances to the final Saturday morning against the winner of Thursday's second semifinal between the host Redbirds and Belleville East.

The Tigers gave up the opening run in the top of the first, but then dominated after that, with the five-run first, with everyone in the lineup contributing.

"We got behind early with Quincy pushing one across early," said Edwardsville head coach Tim Funkhouser, "but we responded well. We just continue to recognize the game's played pitch-by-pitch, and our guys took really good at-bats, and I thought we put ourselves in a position to score more runs in that first inning, and really throughout the game, we had different opportunities to push more across, but I liked our steady approach at the plate, and our guys play with a good sense of urgency on it, and whenever they mishit one, they try to make that adjustment the next time."

Schaefer pitched another good game, despite giving up the opening run, and he became sharper as the game went along.

"Yeah, he wasn't as sharp; he left a couple over, had a little bad luck, a ball just kind of between third and short, and a ball through the middle that was kind of weakly hit," Funkhouser said, "and then, that one guy drove the RBI (sacrifice) fly, but Hayden (Moore) made a great play on it, but he was sharper as the game went on, and made some really good pitches after that, so we've been getting a consistent effort out of him, so it wasn't surprising that he was able to bounce back after the first."

Schaefer's outing allows the Tigers to pitch Matthew Boyer in the regional final on Saturday, as the pitching staff continues to impress.

"We've had several guys throw well all year for us," Funkhouser said, "so we have a lot of different options. We really haven't got caught up in a one, 1A, 1B, one-two-three scenario, it's just trying to get a feel for it, and make a decision, and who knows if we make the decision, but we have to go with the decision and make it, and I thought Schaefer did an outstanding job."

A good problem to have, indeed, but nonetheless, a problem.

"Yeah, and it is a problem," Funkhouser said with a laugh. "You've got to eventually send somebody out there, but that being said, all of our guys have expected to do well

when they're out there, and they've wanted the ball. And they've had to compete for innings all year, throughout the pitching depth. So it's been something that they value, the opportunity, and we'll look forward to getting better the next couple of days leading into Saturday."

The Blue Devils scored their only run in the first, starting with one out. Noah Harbin singled to get things going, Trevor Wiemelt also singled, and Donovan Prost reached on an error to load the bases. Cole Parkhill hit a fly ball to right that Moore made a great catch on, but Harbin tagged up and scored to give Quincy a 1-0 lead. Jayden Rice grounded out to end the inning.

The Tigers sent 10 men to the plate in the home half, starting with a Moore double and a base hit by Blake Burris. Drake Westcott singled home Moore, sending Burris to second, and Joe Copeland drew a walk to load the bases. Josh Ohl was hit by a pitch to force home the second run of the inning, and after an infield fly by Max Ringering, Dalton Wallace's double brought home, Westcott and Copeland, sending Ohl to third. Ohl scored on a wild pitch, and after a walk to Joe Toscano, Logan Cromer struck out and Moore flew out to center to end the inning, with the Tigers up 5-1.

Edwardsville then scored twice more in the third to up their advantage, Jacob Kitchen, who took over as catcher after Wallace was ejected in the top of the inning, singled to start the inning and went to second on a Toscano hit. One out later, Moore and Burris both drew walks to force home Kitchen, and the Blue Devils brought in Jerry Carpenter to pitch. A Westcott grounder to second brought in Toscano and Copeland grounded to the first baseman to end the inning with the Tigers up 7-1.

In the home half of the fourth, Ohl led off with a walk, and Ringering doubled to in the right-center field gap, sending Ohl to third. A walk to Kitchen loaded the bases, and Toscano hit into a fielder's choice, forcing courtesy runner Aaron Young at second, but Ohl scored to make it 8-1. Gavin Huebner then singled home Toscano to make it 9-1.

In the meantime, Schaefer pitched very well, giving up a single to Logan Eaton in the second and a triple to Prost in the third, but neither runner scored, and at one point, Schaefer retired nine in a row before Parkhill was hit by a pitch with two out in the sixth, but Schaefer fanned Rice to end the inning.

The Tigers ended the game in the bottom of the sixth. With one out, Kitchen singled and went to second on an error by the left fielder, went to third on a Toscano hit, and Huebner was hit by a pitch to load the bases again. Moore walked to force in a run, and a sacrifice fly to left by Burris drove home Toscano with the game-ending run because of the 10-run rule, giving Edwardsville its 11-1 win.

The Tigers are now 31-5 on the season, and will play the Redbirds-Lancers winner in the final Saturday morning at 10 a.m., moved up from 11 due to Edwardsville's Graduation Day ceremonies that afternoon. Edwardsville has met many of its goals set for this season but will strive for more.

“We’ve already accomplished several of our goals this year,” Funkhouser said, “but our guys are not satisfied with that. We’ve won 20 games, we’ve won 25 games, we won the Southwestern Conference championship, we’ve won 30 games, so our guys could stand there and pat themselves on the back, but the way that they’ve been approaching the game is to have more than that. So, we want to go out there and win ourselves a regional title, and those are something that we don’t take for granted. We want to cherish that, and be ready to go.”





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