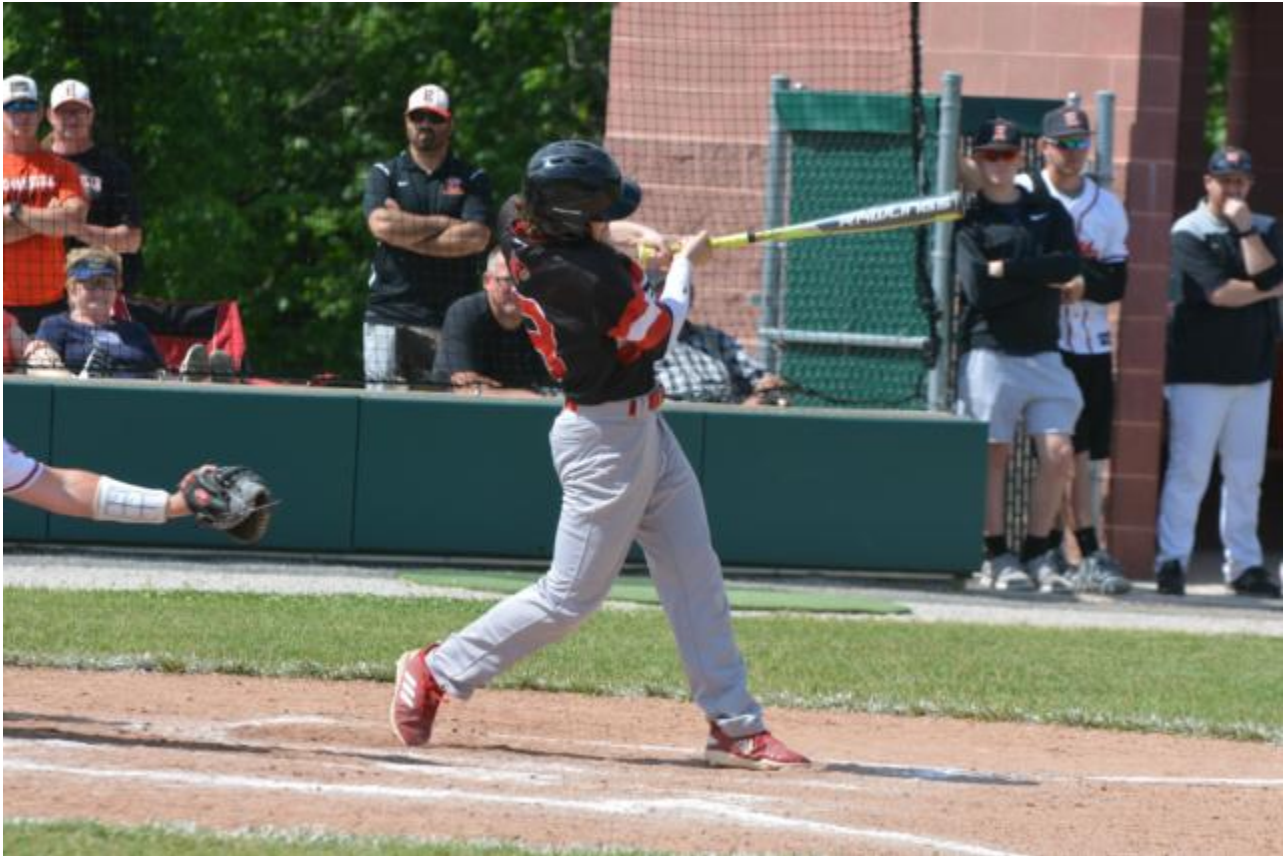
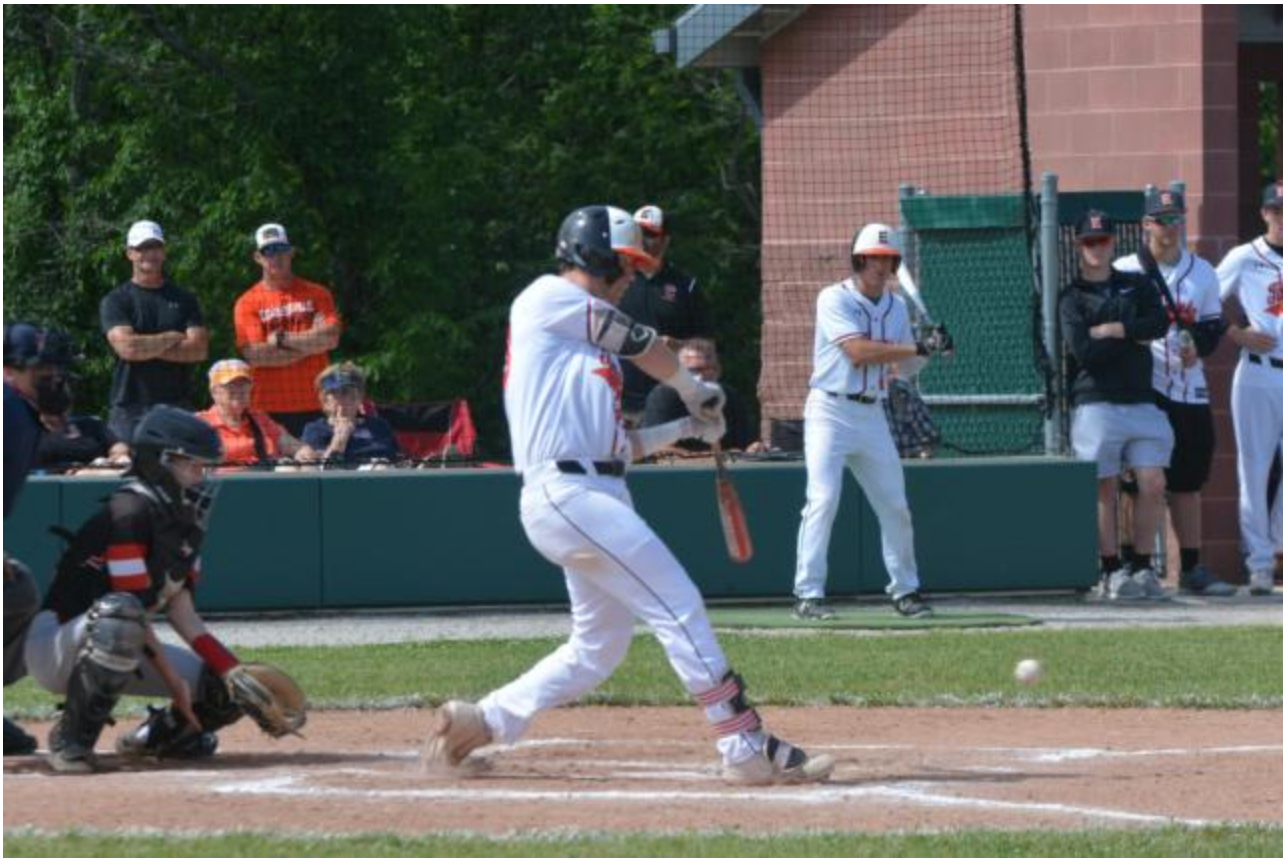


Boyer Scatters Two Hits, Fans Six As Tigers Win Regional Title Over Redbirds 8-1

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
May 26 2019 8:07 PM







ALTON – Edwardsville pitcher Matthew Boyer allowed only two hits while striking out six in five innings of work, while the Tigers scored four runs in the third inning to break the game open as Edwardsville defeated Alton 8-1 to win the IHSA Class 4A regional championship game Saturday morning at Redbird Field.

The Tigers broke open the game with the four-run third, on only two hits in the inning, as Edwardsville advances to the Bloomington sectional next week.

Boyer was dominant on the mound in allowing the two hits, the only two baserunners that the Redbirds had in the first five innings.

“He was outstanding,” said Edwardsville coach Tim Funkhouser, “and he’s been good for us all year, but I loved his poise and his ability to keep making pitch after pitch, and he’s just continued to get better throughout the season. He executed his game plan, and did outstanding for us.”

The Tigers benefitted also from timely hitting in the third inning, scoring two runs on a single and double respectively to highlight the inning.

“All our guys practice,” said Funkhouser, “and all our guys, when given an opportunity, I think they expect to do well. And that’s a good thing. And having our order,

throughout the order, that the other team doesn't get a break I think is pretty tough on a pitching staff and the pitcher on the mound. And we've got multiple guys throughout the order that have come through with us during the course of the season. Like Jacob Kitchen banged out two hits today, and it's not like he hasn't been in there, and he's just another example of guys coming through, and so, I think our guys are really tough to pitch to, and we continue to just compete every pitch."

Kitchen started at catcher in place of Dalton Wallace, who served an automatic one-game suspension after being ejected in Wednesday's semifinal against Quincy, and Kitchen played well.

"Oh, yeah, I think he expected himself to do well, he wants to be out there,' Funkhouser said, "he wants to be out there throughout the season, and I think he started 10 games this year, so it's not like he's a fish out of water, and when he's been out there, he's really competed well for us. So like I mentioned earlier, that all our guys compete in practice every day, and each of our guys are hitting on the field, each of our guys are doing their defensive reps, so I think they expect to do well."

Alton head coach Scott Harper praised Boyer highly for his performance.

"He's a good pitcher," Harper said. "When we faced him the first time, we knew that hits and runs would be hard to come by. He had good command of the strike zone, and they also made great defensive plays, which helped him."

The Redbirds kept competing and battling throughout the game, and Harper praised his team.

"We could have easily rolled over, and made it a short game," Harper said, "but we continued to compete."

Jackson Brooks had the first Alton hit, a two-out single in the first, but was stranded. In the bottom of the inning, Drake Westcott and Joe Copeland drew walks, but Riley Phillips got Josh Ohl looking with a good pitch to end the inning scoreless for both teams.

The Tigers scored first in the bottom of the second, with one out, both Joe Toscano and Kitchen drew back-to-back walks. Both advanced on a passed ball, and then Tocano scored and Kitchen went to third on another passed ball to make the score 1-0 Edwardsville. The Tigers then came up with their four-run third, starting with walks to Blake Burris, Westcott and Copeland to load the bases. Ohl hit into a fielder's choice that forced Burris at the plate, and Max Ringering flew to center for the second out. Toscano then singled to right to score Westcott and Copeland, and then a Kitchen

double scored Copeland and Toscano to make it 5-0 for Edwardsville. Gavin Huebner drew a walk, but Hayden Moore flew to center to end the inning.

Edwardsville came up with two more in the fourth. With one out, Westcott drew his third walk of the day, and Copeland singled him to third. Ohl's sacrifice fly to center scored Westcott, and a Ringering double scored Copeland, with Ringering going to third on the throw home. Toscano fouled out to first to end the inning.

Meanwhile, Boyer was brilliant on the mound, retiring eight in a row before giving up a fourth-inning single to Brooks. Boyer got Adam Stilts to hit into a double play, and then set the side down in order in the fifth.

Alton got on the board in the sixth, starting with back-to-back walks to Zack Knight and Owen Stendeback. Both advanced on a wild pitch and Robby Taul drove home Knight with an RBI single for the Redbirds' first run, sending Stendeback to third. Taul then stole second, but Dawson Taylor set the side down with two strikeouts and a ground out to end the inning.

The Tigers got the run back in the bottom of the inning, starting with Westcott getting his fourth walk of the day and a Copeland single. Both advanced on a fly out to center, and Ty Beruman's pinch-hit single scored Westcott and put Copeland on third. In the seventh, both Dylan Lahue and Caleb Noble drew back-to-back walks, but Collin Salter struck out the two batters he faced to preserve the 8-1 Edwardsville win.

The Tigers are now 32-5 on the year and advance to the sectional semifinals, going up against Belleville West, a 6-4 winner over O'Fallon in the final of the Granite City regional, on Wednesday at a site and time to be announced by the IHSA early next week. Funkhouser knows that his team will be ready to face the Maroons.

"Right now, we're going to cherish the victory today," Funkhouser said, "and we'll get back at practice, and we'll continue to prepare for whoever the opponent is for Wednesday's game, but right now, we want to kind of savor the victory and the journey we've had thus far, and then get back on that horse and try to get better next week."

The Redbirds end the season 14-19, but Harper is very proud of his players and their efforts all season.

"Just working with this group," Harper said when asked about a favorite memory of the 2019 season. "I told them that every team is a unique team, and we had the chance to work together around a game we all love, baseball. There's always ups and downs in a season, but a part of this season and the program are all of the life lessons we get from this game."



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