



Stearns Smacks Key Hit In Fourth, Tigers Cruise To 12-2 Win Over Chatham Glenwood In Baseball Home Opener

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Spencer Stearns had a two-run double in the fourth that put Edwardsville on top for good, and the Tigers scored twice in the fourth, four in the fifth and six in the sixth inning in going on to a 12-2 six-inning win over Chatham Glenwood in the baseball home opener Wednesday afternoon at Tom Pile Field.

It was Edwardsville's second win in as many games to start the season after having the 2020 season cancelled due to the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and head coach Tim Funkhouser couldn't be any happier with how things have started this year.

"Yeah, we're really happy with our guys going out there," Funkhouser said. "Yesterday, we were real excited to play, and there were some good moments and inconsistent moments. We figured that would happen, especially early on, and that's kind of baseball. But I thought we showed a lot more consistency; you can see guys that are growing up pretty quick in a short period of time that we have and seize some opportunities. We have a lot of different guys that are going to impact our club, and you saw a lot of contributors today."

There were many good performances up and down the lineup, including Stearns' key hit, and Evan Funkhouser's pitching five very good innings, especially settling down after the first inning and finding a groove, ending up with Funkhouser giving up two runs on four hits, walking two and striking out four.

"Yeah," Funkhouser said with a smile. "(Cade) Copeland had that big hit; he played on the JV field yesterday, I texted him first thing in the morning, I said 'you're on the varsity field, you're starting in right field,' he was able to put a swing on one, and hit well. I thought Evan, after he gave up the first line drive in the first inning. And after that, I thought he really settled in and made pitches. And that was important to us to be able to get those innings in with as many games as we have, six games this week in six days, so that was important. And then, to see the guys that were coming off the bench today and produce the way that they did, too. So I really like the way our guys go about their business every day in trying to get better."

That's been a trademark of the Tigers' teams over the years, with the players going about their business every day, having fun and doing everything to can to improve as baseball players.

"I think you can have a lot of fun when you have a focus each day," Funkhouser said, "and get a little more consistent. Competition, success is never guaranteed, especially in baseball. But we want to play with an edge, like enjoy the competition, but not fear. But we also want to enjoy that process, and I think when you find that balance, it makes the game so much fun that everybody loves. And it's fun to watch, too."

With everything that's happened in the close to last two years, Funkhouser and his players and coaching staff are very happy to be back on the fields and playing.

"There were times yesterday I was probably grinning under my mask, and I was just giddy," Coach Funkhouser said with a smile. "But I was really elated for the kids, because to be able to have this opportunity we're in. It'll be fun each day, and we're going to make the most of it. We'll be back at it tomorrow against Highland, who we played on Tuesday. I'm sure they'll make some adjustments against some of our guys, and we'll try to make some against theirs, and go start from scratch."



The Titans scored first in the opening inning, starting with a Nolan McMasters double to right center on the game's first pitch, going to third on a ground out and scoring on a Will Plattner sacrifice fly to left. Funkhouser settled down after allowing the opening run and retired five in a row before allowing a second inning walk to Eli Curtis. then

allowed only three baserunners in the first four inning, striking out three and allowing only two hits and another walk. His defense helped out by turning a fourth inning double play to end the frame.

Meanwhile, Edwardsville had a good chance in the home half of the third when Adam Powell singled and Copeland doubled. But pitcher Parker Detmers struck out both Hayden Moore and Grant Huebner, and got Stearns to ground to short to end the inning.

Edwardsville took its first lead in the bottom of the fourth, starting with a Ty Berumen double and Funkhouser reaching second when the first baseman lost a ball in the sun, allowing it to drop for an error, with Beruman taking third and Funkhouser second. Riley Iffrig walked to load the bases, and Kyle Modrusic hit into a force play at second, allowing Beruman to score with Funkhouser going to third.

Zane Danielson came in to pitch for the Titans, and on the first batter he faced, Powell hit a sacrifice fly to center to score Funkhouser and give Edwardsville its first lead at 2-1. Glenwood then tied things up again in the fifth, with Curtis leading off with a walk, going to second on a Sam Hulsey sacrifice and moving to third on a ground out. Curtis scored when Funkhouser was called for a balk to tie the game 2-2.

The tie didn't last long, as in the bottom of the fifth, Moore led off with a walk, stole second and went to third when the catcher's throw went into center field. Huebner was hit by a pitch, stole second, and both Moore and Huebner scored on Stearns' to right center to give the Tigers the lead at 4-2. Berumen was hit by a pitch, and one out later, Iffrig walked to load the bases. Kyle Modrusic stroked a two-run single to left, with Iffrig stopping at second. A force play and pop out to short ended the inning with Edwardsville leading 6-2.

Moore led off the sixth with a walk and stolen base, going to third on a passed ball on a walk to Huebner. Stearns was hit by a pitch to load the bases, and all runners advanced on a balk, with Moore scoring to make it 7-2. After a strikeout, Funkhouser drove in two runs with a double, Iffrig was hit by a pitch, and RBI singles by Modrusic, pinch hitter Zak Zoelzer and Copeland ended the game 12-2 on the 10-run rule.

The Tigers are off to a 2-0 start and will host Highland in a rematch of the season opener on Tuesday that Edwardsville won 6-5 on the road. Funkhouser is looking ahead to the rematch with the Bulldogs, along with the upcoming Southwestern Conference schedule and the entire 2021 season.

"Yeah, those are a little farther down the line," Funkhouser said. "In the short term, we'll probably play 13 games or so, I'm not sure what we're at on that as far as starting the conference. Our guys will have to learn how to bounce back to the field each day; it's

almost like a college summer league, where you're playing 42 games in 45 days, and you've got to learn how to be real consistent, and I thought our guys did a good job with that today."



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