



Collinsville Slips By Edwardsville 1-0 In Eight Innings In Girls Softball Pitching Duel

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - A run with the bases loaded in the top of the eighth inning allowed Collinsville to take a Southwestern Conference softball thriller over Edwardsville 1-0 Thursday afternoon at the Edwardsville Sports Complex.

It was a tight contest all the way, as Tiger pitchers Ryleigh Owens and Brooke Tolle threw very well.

Amber Gassmann opened the Kahoks' eighth with an infield single, and a bunt single by Katie Bardwell put runners on first and second. Jerrica Asbeck sacrificed the runners to second and third, and after Mackenzie Young popped to short, Simpson was intentionally walked to load the bases and bring up Lexi Rafalowski. Rafalowski reached on an infield error, allowing Gassmann to score and put Collinsville up 1-0, with the inning ending on a strikeout.

Edwardsville put the tying run on with one out on a Gorniak triple to right field, but Lawrence grounded into a fielder's choice to short, with Gorniak being thrown out at the plate to keep the score 1-0. A fly out to the right fielder ended the game with the Kahoks winning 1-0.

"They made plays, they put the ball in play when they needed to," Edwardsville head girls softball coach Lori Blade said. "I couldn't be more pleased with our pitching tonight; both kids came in and threw the ball really well. We just didn't play good enough behind them to get a run across and win the game. But we've got to be better, we've got to get bunts down in situations, and they didn't quit. So I was pleased with that."

The missed chances came back to haunt the Tigers.

"We did. We were a little flat today," Blade said, "but you'd think we'd have a little urgency in a 0-0 game, and we just kind of floated along. But kudos to Collinsville, because that's a good win for them, and they played really well today."

Kahoks pitcher Kandra Butcher helped keep the Tigers off balance, scattering three hits and striking out eight on the day.

"She moved it around well," Blade said, "but our pitch selection, I thought, the first four or five innings was not overly good. We chased some, and when you do that, that's going to lead to some poor at-bats as far as execution. We're better than that, we'll get better from taking a loss, I think."

Edwardsville had its first chance in the opening inning, with Lexi Gorniak reaching on an error and going to third on a Tolle single, but a strikeout ended the inning. In the

home half of the third, Lexie Griffin doubled down the left field line to lead off, and Gorniak was hit by a pitch to put runners on first and second, but Griffin was thrown out at third on a double steal attempt and Sydney Lawrence struck out to end the inning.

Riley Simpson became the first Kahok runner in the fourth after Owens threw a perfect first three innings on a lead-off single, but she was stranded after Owens struck out the next two batters and ground ball out to end the inning. In the Edwardsville fifth, Sam Sanders drew a lead-off walk and beat out a throw to second on a fielder's choice, with Griffin also reaching to create a first and second situation, but Butcher got two fly outs to right and center to end the inning.

Tolle came in to pitch in the seventh and retired the side in order, and the Tigers had a chance to win the game in the bottom of the inning, starting with Owens reaching on a throwing error by the pitcher, and after a strikeout, Tatum Van Ryswyk sacrificed Owens to second, but a fly out ended the frame, forcing extra innings.

Simpson, Gassmann and Bardwell had the only hits for Collinsville, while Gorniak, Tolle and Griffin had the hits for the Tigers. Owens fanned eight in the circle, while Tolle struck out two.

Collinsville is now 5-6 and hosts a doubleheader against Civic Memorial on Friday, with the first game starting at 4:30 p.m. The Tigers fall to 9-1, and are at Breese Mater Dei Catholic Friday in a 4:30 p.m. start, then host Alton in a single game Saturday morning at 10 a.m. Blade is thinking that Edwardsville will take the lessons learned from the loss and bounce back very well.

"We do, and we need to learn, we need to learn," Blade said, "because we have to execute a little bit better throughout. That the game of fast pitch, that's a good game right there. If you don't get bunts down and move kids, they made plays and we didn't at key times, but I couldn't be more proud of our pitching."





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