

Tigers Bounce Back After Lancers Tie Game In Fifth, Stearns Hits Two-Run Shot To Spark Edwardsville To 9-5 Win

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EDWARDSVILLE - A two-run homer in the home half of the fifth by Spencer Stearns after Belleville East came back to tie the game in the top half 4-4 gave the Tigers a lead they'd never give up in a 9-5 win over the Lancers in a Southwestern Conference baseball game played Wednesday evening at Tom Pile Field.

The game was moved up to Wednesday from Thursday because of forecasts of heavy rain and possible storms forecast for Thursday, and it came on the heels of the Lancers dealing Edwardsville its first loss of the season the day before.

After a scoreless first, Riley Iffrig put Edwardsville on top with a two-run homer over the boards in right field, with Caleb Copeland scoring ahead of Iffrig to give the Tigers a 2-0 lead. Edwardsville then scored twice more in the last half of the third, on an RBI triple by Grant Huebner, and Stearns' sacrifice fly to right that brought in Huebner to make it 4-0 after three innings.

East tied the game with four runs in the fifth, with Joe Mendiola stroking an RBI single and Pat Mendiola launching a three-run over the fence in left field to tie the game 4-4. In the bottom of the inning, after Cole Funkhouser was forced at second, with Huebner running the bases, Stearns hit a home run over the left-field fence to give the Tigers the lead back at 6-4.

Edwardsville then added three insurance runs in the sixth on a Kayden Jennings sacrifice fly, a Funkhouser ground out to the shortstop, and Jacoby Roberson scoring on a wild pitch to make it 9-4. Joe Mendiola grounded to third to give the Lancers a run in the top of the seventh, but it would be all they would score as the Tigers won 9-5.

Huebner had two hits and an RBI to lead Edwardsville, while Copeland had a pair of hits, Stearns' homer was his only hit to go along with three RBIs, Iffrig's two-run homer would be his only hit and RBIs of the game, Cade Hardy had a hit and Jennings also drove in a run.

Stearns went six innings on the mound, allowing four runs on eight hits while walking one and striking out seven. Alec Marchetto pitched the seventh and did well, allowing a run on a hit, which was earned, not allowing a walk, and fanning one.

East is now 22-3, while the Tigers go to 23-1 and host the 14th annual Tiger Classic round-robin tournament, starting with a game against Teutopolis on Friday night, with a 7 p.m. first pitch, then on Saturday, start off with a game against Highland at 10 a.m., then meeting Chatham Glenwood at 12:30 p.m. The Tigers then play at Freeburg on May 10 at 4:30 p.m., then go against Francis Howell of Weldon Spring, Mo., in St. Charles County, on May 13 at 6:45 p.m.