

Edwardsville Wins In Walk-Off Fashion, Move On To State Semifinals

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
June 6 2022 10:05 PM



BLOOMINGTON – The Tigers are going to state. The Edwardsville Tigers that is.

It was a battle of the Tigers Monday afternoon as Edwardsville High School's baseball team took on Plainfield North High School, both schools represented by the same mascot.

It was Edwardsville though who came up with the narrow 3-2 win in the Super-Sectionals to move on to state.

This game saw an interesting dynamic. Edwardsville scored the first chance they had, while Plainfield North scored on their last chance. It made for a close game and a wild finish.

Senior Spencer Stearns started on the mound for Edwardsville. He pitched a 1-2-3 inning to bring his team up to bat.

Stearns hit a one-out single and then junior Riley Iffrig followed suit. They both stole bases to end up in scoring position with two outs. Senior Adam Powell stepped up and hit a double scoring both men to make it 2-0 Edwardsville.

Stearns had another 1-2-3 inning in the second. As for Plainfield North, they went to the bullpen early taking out starter Kash Koslowski after just an inning, and replacing him with Ryan Mickenbecker. He was able to blank Edwardsville for the next five innings.

As for Stearns, he pitched the first four innings picking up three strikeouts. His day was ended a little early due to stiffness in his throwing arm according to Edwardsville head coach Tim Funkhouser. He still batted and remained in the infield at third base. Funkhouser had no other information on the severity of the injury, but it seems to not be that serious.

So, sophomore Alec Marchetto had his time to shine. He came in and struck out the side in the top of the fifth and looked like he was dialed in.

“Marchetto has been outstanding for us, and I mean going into this competition for us, he’s only thrown two innings in the postseason and he’s good enough that he could have started two games at least already.”

“He was ready for the occasion, and it was fun to see him compete,” Funkhouser said.

Plainfield North gave Marchetto some trouble though and managed to tie the game back up in the top of the seventh.

Things got started when Brandon Bak singled. Ryan Nelson came up and doubled moving Bak to third with no outs. MJ Ansari came up to the plate and hit a two-RBI single and just like that the game was tied. Marchetto still hadn’t picked up an out and had a runner on second.

If it wasn't for an incredible diving catch by junior Caleb Copeland, Edwardsville may have trailed. With a runner at third Copeland ran on to a ball hit into shallow right field, but he made possibly the catch of his life to prevent the runner from scoring and kept the game tied.

Edwardsville still got to bat in the bottom of the seventh and that's all they needed.

It looked like the game was going to go to extra innings after Edwardsville's first two batters got out, but junior Cade Hardy had other ideas. He singled and then stole second base. With Hardy in scoring position, a single could end the game.

Up steps junior Cole Funkhouser. He singled into left field as Hardy ran as fast as he could rounding third base. After a sliding play at the plate, Hardy scored the winning run and Edwardsville walked it off by a score of 3-2.

"I knew Hardy was on second, so if I put a ball out there, he would score on it," Cole Funkhouser said postgame about the walk-off RBI single. He remained humble saying: "I just got a good pitch to hit and had a good swing."

"He's been seeing the ball really well, I mean he led off for us for the first half of the season," Coach Funkhouser said about his son.

"Yeah, you're proud for him, you're happy for him, and I'm that way with all our guys so I guess I have a lot of kids," Funkhouser said jokingly.

Now, the Tigers have the opportunity to repeat what they did in 2019. They are only two wins away from another state championship.

This was Edwardsville's closest postseason game yet as Plainfield North really made them earn it, but EHS got the job done. They move on to the State Semifinals this Friday and take on the winner of Brother Rice vs. Lincoln-Way West at 3 p.m.

The state semifinals, third place and championship game will all be held at DuPage Medical Group Field located at 1 Mayor Art Schultz Dr, Joliet, IL 60432.