

# Chiarodo Throws Complete Game, Tigers Win Sectional Title Over Minooka For Second Straight Season

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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BLOOMINGTON – There was a decision to be made during the seventh-inning stretch for the Tigers. Go to a closer, or leave their sophomore starter in there to finish out a complete game?

Edwardsville's coaching staff decided to go with the latter Saturday afternoon in the IHSA Class 4A Bloomington Sectional game held at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The Tigers needed just three more outs in a one-run game in the bottom of the seventh.

Joe Chiarodo stayed out on the bump to try and pitch a complete game and did what was necessary to protect a 3-2 lead as the Tigers went on to win by that margin.

"That's the beauty of having a great assistant coach in Mike Sabatino because he knows we give the feel for it," Edwardsville head coach Tim Funkhouser said. "We talk about a little input and other things, but I think that was the right call to leave him out there."

Things got dicey for the sophomore slinger though.

After a walk and a single, Chiarodo had runners on first and second with no outs. The two runners advanced to second and third after a wild throw to second.

Down by a run, the Minooka bench was fired up with hopes of a walk-off victory, but after a bizarre double play, it was the Tigers celebrating.

After a long flyout, the runner at second tried to advance, while the man on third didn't move a muscle. It turned into a double rundown situation where the Tigers were able to get the lead man thanks to some quick thinking from senior Caeleb Copeland. It resulted in one of the weirdest double plays, and it was exactly what the Tigers needed.

"Cope did a good job of getting in quick," Chiarodo said postgame. "We practice rundowns a lot, so I wasn't too worried about it. There was a huge momentum shift after that play."

It completely turned the game around as Chiarodo was able to strike out the final batter for the 3-2 win.

The Tigers scored a single run in the first, third, and fourth innings.

The game started off with a Cole Funkhouser double. He was later batted in by Riley Iffrig's single to grab the early 1-0 lead. Edwardsville wasn't able to capitalize with runners on second and third and had to settle for just a single run.

The Indians tied it up in the home half of the first when Andrew Forillo reached on an error, allowing the runner to score from third.

Copeland's RBI single scored Funkhouser in the third to regain the lead.



In the fourth, Montrez West pinch-ran for Lucas Huebner and quickly stole second. He then stole third, forcing a wild throw to the bag, allowing him to come all the way home and extend the lead to 3-1.

Minooka's final run came in the bottom of the fifth thanks to a sac fly.

Chiarodo finished the game with just a pair of strikeouts, his defense did the rest of the work, and he was never worried.

"I have so much confidence with the guys behind me," Chiarodo said.

Coach Funkhouser was never in doubt of his starter either.

"He's really grown," Funkhouser said of Chiarodo. "I think early in the season, he'd have a runner on third, get a flyball to score a run or whatever, but now he's able to make that big pitch for a strikeout, over and over toward the end."

As for Chiarodo, he sure didn't want to come out.

“told me I was starting it and I told myself I’m finishing it too. I wanted this game so bad,” he said.

He’s pretty confident in his team’s ability as well with just three more wins standing in the way of back-to-back state titles.

“If we just keep executing, we’re going to be hard to beat.”

Edwardsville (30-9) advances to the Super-Sectional game to be played on Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup> back at IWU at 6 p.m. The Tigers will be taking on Oswego East (23-11) with the winner headed to Duly Health & Care Field in Joliet that weekend for state.