

# **Tigers Erupt For Five-Run First Inning - Earn Trip Back To State Title Game**

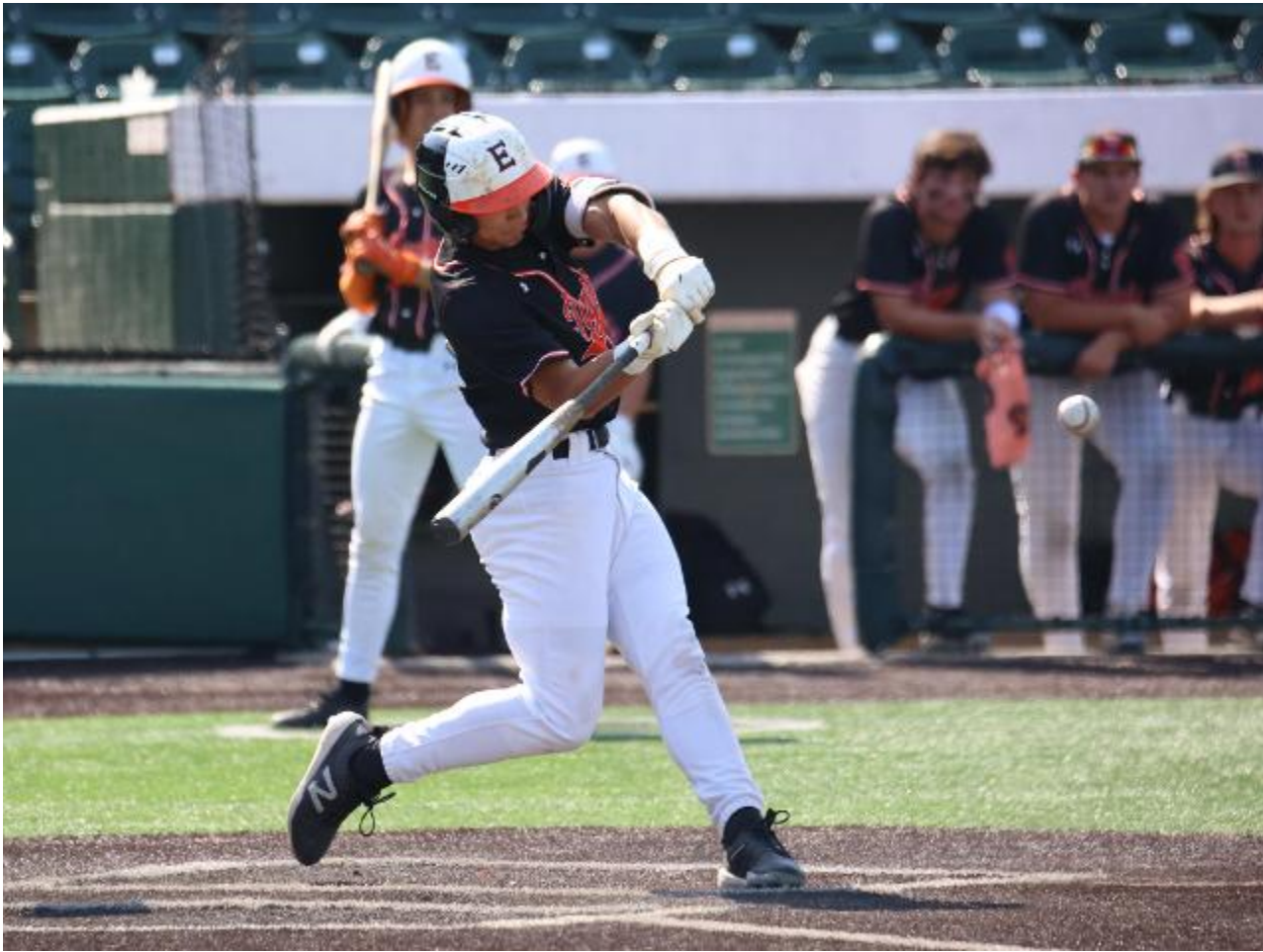
by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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JOLIET - Kayden Jennings couldn't have picked a better time to hit his first career home run.

He hit a three-run bomb well over the left field wall in the first inning of the IHSA Class 4A state semifinals to increase his team's lead to 5-0.

"I've never felt anything like that," Jennings said. "It felt really great."



Thanks to a huge first inning, the Tigers beat the York (Elmhurst) Dukes by a score of 7-3 and advance to the state championship game for the second straight year.

"It feels great," Edwardsville head coach Tim Funkhouser said.

"Our guys played extremely well, showed out again on the mound and we just came out early taking great at bats."

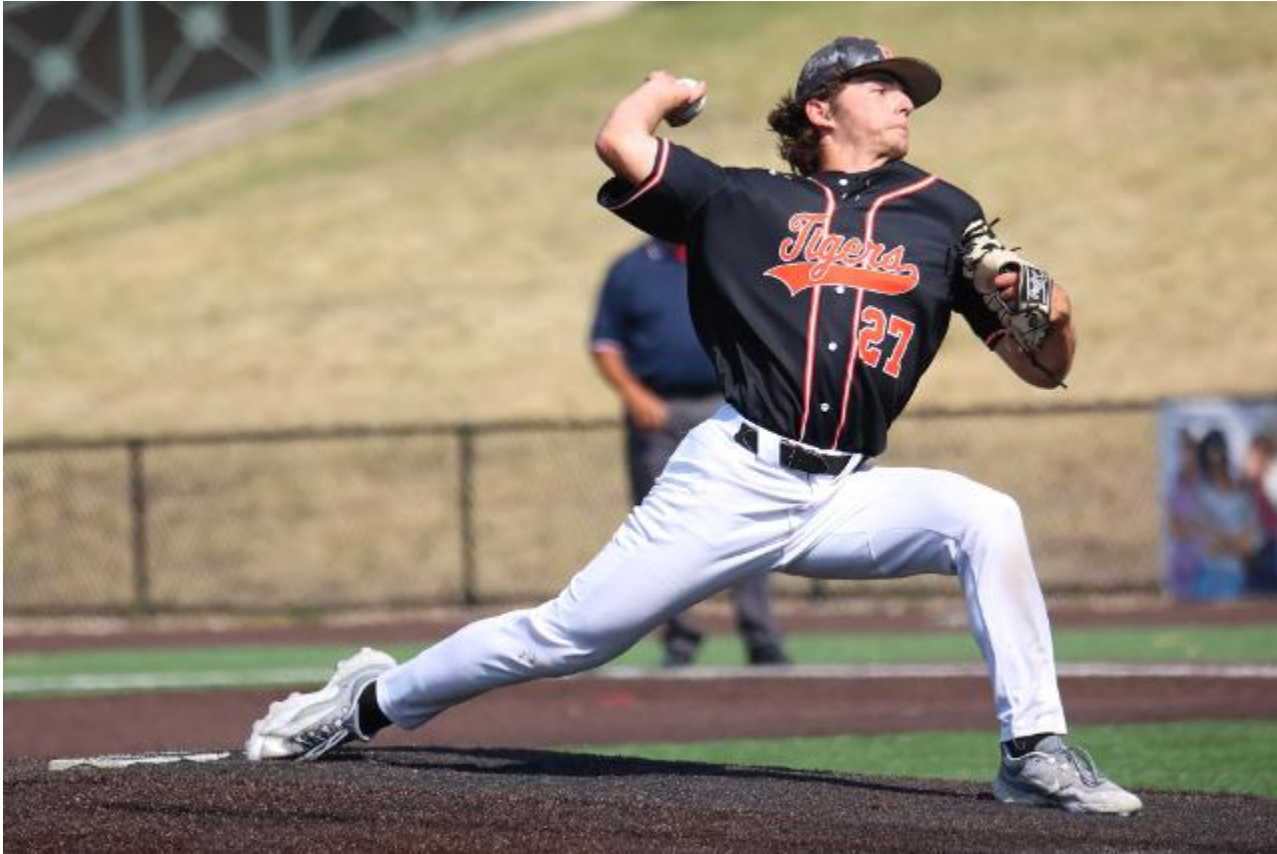
After Joe Chiarodo was walked with one out, he immediately stole second to get into scoring position. Caeleb Copeland swapped spots with him thanks to an RBI double to get the quick 1-0 lead.

The Tigers doubled that lead from what coach Funkhouser called a "broken play".

Andrew Hendrickson was walked and Copeland took off to steal third. Now on the corners, Hendrickson got everyone's attention while stealing second allowing Copeland to dart home and double the lead.

It seemed like a set play, but coach assured that it wasn't, just an example of great, heads up base-running.

Chiarodo started on the mound for the Tigers and went 5 1/3 innings. He allowed a single run on five hits while striking out seven.



He found himself in deep water in the top of the fourth when he was dealing with the bases loaded and only one out. He gave up a single that luckily only plated a run as the Dukes cut into the lead to make it 7-1. Chiarodo got out of the inning via a strikeout.

The Tigers tacked on their other two runs in the bottom of the fifth thanks to a sacrifice fly from Hendrickson and an RBI single from Jennings.

Having thrown a complete game in a 3-2 win over Minooka in the Bloomington Sectional Final a week ago, Chiarodo's day was cut a little short.

"He probably could've fought through another five or six batters, but for his best interest and our interest as a group I thought that was the best time to take him out," Funkhouser said.



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His replacement was Jake Holder who went two-up, two-down to finish the inning. He stayed out on the bump to begin the seventh and dealt with his first two batters before allowing a double, a walk, and a single to load the bases.

The Tigers made another call to the bullpen and brought in freshman Tony Eberlin. He had trouble locating the strike zone and walked two runs in as York made it a 7-3 game with the tying run coming up to the plate.

One last ditch effort to close out the game was made when Hendrickson left his post at first base and stepped onto the mound to get the final out. He struck out the final batter in what was a more eventful seventh inning than the Tigers were expecting.

As a game overall, Funkhouser was pleased.

"I thought throughout the early parts of the game we took really good at bats," he said.

"Their right-hander (Tommy VanDaff) made it a little tougher for a little bit and then we started taking better at-bats on him."

The bats were hot early on, and to close out the game Edwardsville's defense stepped up big time. The outfield made a couple of clutch diving catches and the infield answered the call as well.

The win brings Edwardsville to 32-9 on the season.

The Tigers will now play in the state championship game on Saturday, June 10th at 5:30 p.m. at Duly Health & Care Field. They will take on the winner of the other semifinal between Brother Rice (25-15) and New Trier (25-7).

