

# Edwardsville slips past Alton 4-0 in tight baseball matchup

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
April 29 2015 6:05 AM



It's pretty safe to say the last few years has seen a good baseball rivalry develop between Alton and Edwardsville.

The Tigers have become one of the top programs in the Southwestern Conference and even the nation; the Redbirds have had some pretty good players and seasons come through their program as well.

The two teams clashed again, this time at Edwardsville's Tom Pile Field, and the Tigers, behind a three-run fifth-inning homer from Collin Clayton and six-and-a-third strong innings from pitcher Jake Garella, gained a big advantage in the SWC race with a 4-0 win Tuesday afternoon.

Coupled with an earlier win at Lloyd Hopkins Field in Alton, the win gave EHS a season sweep of the Redbirds, though there's a possibility the two may see each other again in May; both have been assigned to the same IHSA Class 4A regional, scheduled for late May at Tom Pile Field, with the winner going to the Illinois Wesleyan Sectional.

Garella's effort on the day – he had six strikeouts and three hits allowed in his 6.1 innings on an unofficial count of 98 pitches – made Tiger coach Tim Funkhouser very happy. “Jake was outstanding today,” Funkhouser said. “He had trouble at the start with his breaking pitches; he wasn't getting a feel for them, and I was wondering for a while if it was going to be his day today.

“That he was able to bounce back from the start and pitch well showed some mental toughness on his part, and that was great to see.”

The Redbirds went with Ben Cusac as their starting pitcher on the day, followed by Nick Cauley and Jacob St. Peters. They combined to give up six hits on the day and despite the homer given up to Clayton, AHS coach Todd Haug was pleased as well. “I've got no complaints about the pitching today,” Haug said. “The pitch (Clayton) hit out of the park was a really good pitch, it just didn't turn out well for us. I've always thought there are three big plays in a baseball game – the big hit, the big pitch and the big play – and if you can get two of those, you'll do pretty well. Just didn't go our way today.

“We'll probably be seeing them again.”

Alton opened up with a chance to get on the board early when Derrick Allen led off with a double down the line in right and, one out later, Bryan Hudson drew a walk to put runners at first and second, but Garella struck out Jake Kanallakan and Steven Pattan to end the threat. The Tigers finally broke through in the third when Bailey Zimmer led off the inning with a single and went to second when Mitchell Krebs reached on an error trying to sacrifice. Both advanced when Dylan Burris sacrificed and Zimmer scored on a groundout to second by Jordan Hovey.

Both teams came up with some sparkling defensive plays before the home half of the fifth arrived, With two out, Burris drew a walk and went to third on a Hovey single to

put runner at the corners. Clayton then came up and, on a 0-1 offering from Cauley, got ahold of a pitch and sent it over the fence in left field to give the Tigers some breathing room.

“That was a big pick-me-up for us,” Funkhouser said. “He's gotten stronger and it's made a difference for us.”

Garella was poised to go the distance for the win, but after striking out Drake Hampton for the first out, he was lifted for Aaron Jackson, who closed out the game but not before issuing two-out walks to Jake Skrabacz and Allen to load the bases. Jackson then got Steven Nguyen to ground to the second for a force, however, preserving the shutout.

The Tigers head to East St. Louis for a 4:30 p.m. Thursday match, while the Redbirds host Belleville East. The two teams will finish a suspended game from earlier in the month before playing the day's regularly scheduled game.

