

Roulanaitis Holds Tigers To Two Hits, Strikes Out 10 - Freeburg Wins Season Opener Over Edwardsville 3-1

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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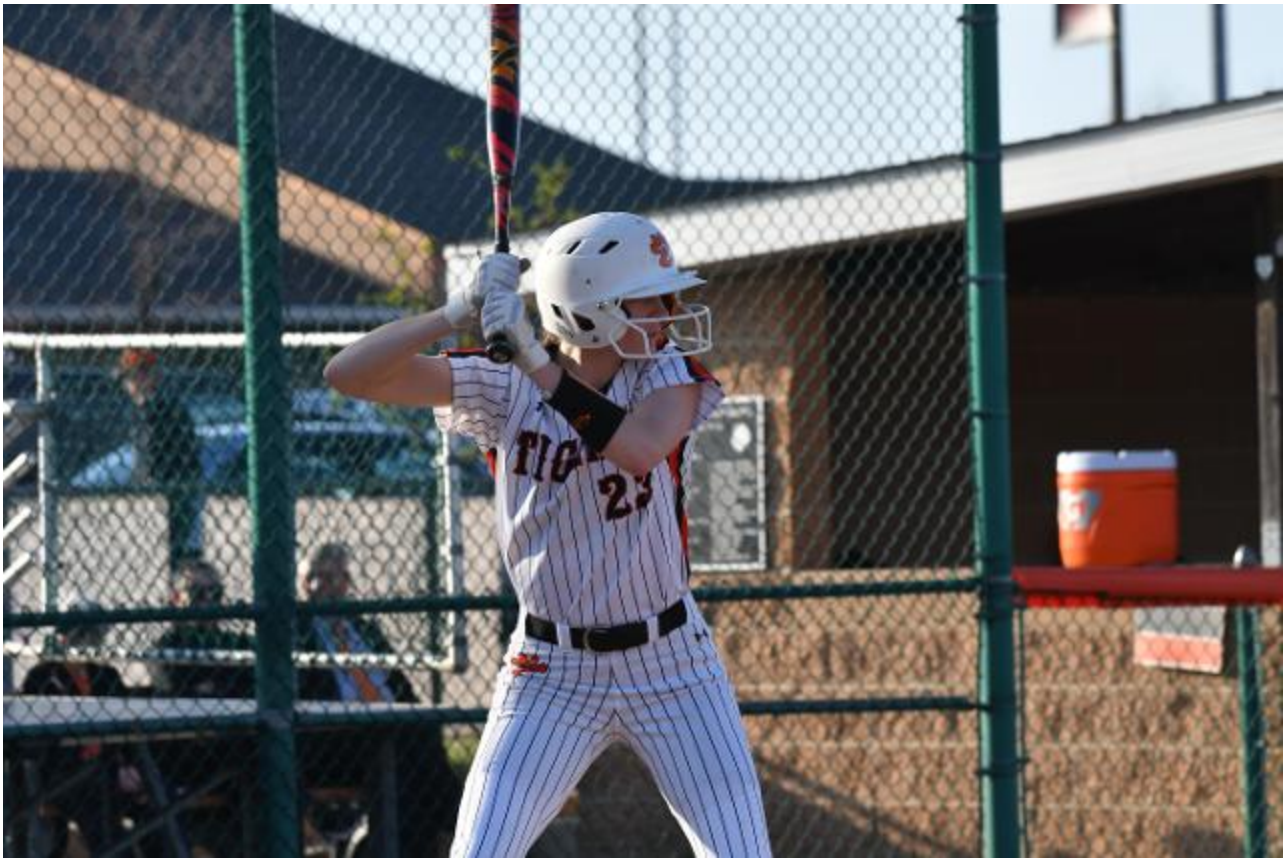




EDWARDSVILLE - Freeburg softball pitcher Sam Roulanaitis, who recently signed to pitch at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo., had a great game for the Midgets, holding Edwardsville to two hits while striking out 10 as Freeburg defeated the Tigers in the season opener 3-1 at the Edwardsville Sports Complex Tuesday afternoon.

Roulanaitis, set down the first nine batters she faced, giving up a run in the fourth inning, and retired 11 of the last 12 hitters late in the game as the Midgets scored the only runs she would need in the third inning.

"There was great pitching," said Edwardsville head coach Caty Happe. "A little disappointed in our hitting, but they were in the same boat last year, and they ended up their season really strong. So we both talked about it. It's a hard game to start this way, but it's great to see where you're at, and where we'll improve."





It was a tough task indeed for the Tigers to see a very good pitcher in the first game of the season, but it's also something that will help the team as the season progresses.

"A Division I pitcher, she's going to get ahead," Happe said. "Her change-up looked great today, and we knew she had that good change-up. But I thought later on in the innings, we started, really after (Jillian) Lane hit that double, to hit the ball hard. So, good adjustments to see there, we just have to have them a little bit earlier."

Riley Nelson also pitched a very good game for Edwardsville, striking out 10 in also throwing a complete game inside the circle.

"She did have a great game," Happe said of Nelson. "Partway through, her pitch count got a little bit high, but I thought then, near the end, she really gutted it out, and showed she can be a number one, and competed."

It was good for the Tigers to finally get a game in and see another team as well, after a bit of a long haul in preseason practice.

"Nice to see," Happe said, "and definitely gives us things to work on. So, this game will only make us better. We love playing them, and excited to get better from here."

Nelson did get stronger as the game went on, and it's a good sign for herself and the Tigers for the new season.

"You know, you like to see pitchers be pitchers and not throwers," Happe said. "And I think she got down in a couple of counts, started guiding it, and started trusting her pitches as the game went on.

The story of the game was Roulanaitis' performance in the circle, and Happe praised her efforts.

"Great pitcher, and always good for us to see, because to compete later in the postseason, we've got to see good pitching."

The Midgets had a good opportunity to strike in the first inning, when Lindsey Muskopft singled to right, but was declared out on interference when Roulanaitis' grounder hit her on the base path, Roulanaitis was credited with a base hit. Briley Schmittling drew a walk, but Nelson caught Emylee Martin looking on strike three to end the inning.

Freeburg broke out on top in the third, starting with an Olivia Joseph single that got away from the left fielder for an error that put Joseph on third, scoring on a passed ball to give the Midgets a 1-0 lead.

Muskopft reached on an error by the second baseman, Roulanaitis drew a walk, and both scored on a double to the center field fence by Schmittling to make the score 3-0.

An infield single by Aubrey Waeltz sent Schmittling to third, where she was tagged out on an attempted bunt by Alayna Blumenkamp. Martin and Olivia Hurst both struck out to end the inning.

The Tigers cut the lead to 3-1 in the fourth, starting with Grace Oertle reaching on a passed ball on strike three, then coming home one out later on Lane's double to left center, Lane taking third when Jillian Hawkes was thrown out at first after striking out.

It would be the only run the Tigers would score, as Roulanaitis pitched around the run, fanning Nelson to end the inning, then only giving up a single to Grace Blakemore in the sixth in going on to the complete game, striking out six along the way.

Nelson also pitched a very good game, allowing only seven hits and three runs, while fanning 10 as well.

The Midgets open their season 1-0, while the Tigers start off 0-1, and next play at Breese Central Friday afternoon, then return home to face Gillespie Monday afternoon, then play at Piassa Southwestern on March 20, all games starting at 4:30 p.m.

Happe knows that the Tigers will be able to bounce back and take on the challenges ahead.

"Bounce back, play Breese on Friday," Happe said, "and hopefully, put some different things together, and compete."



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)