

Freshman Brooke Burris Delivers Walk-Off Hit, Tigers Take 2-1 Win Over Gillespie

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Freshman Brook Burris delivered the big hit in the clutch, rolling a bases-loaded single past the shortstop and into left-center field in the bottom of the seventh inning to give Edwardsville a 2-1 win over Gillespie in an excellently played softball game Thursday afternoon at the Edwardsville District 7 Sports Complex.

The game, postponed from Monday, due to the unseasonably cold weather that passed through the St. Louis area, was a pitcher's duel between the Miners' Emma Gipson and the Tigers' Riley Nelson. Both hurlers didn't disappoint, as Nelson struck out eight, and Gipson fanned four. It was Burris' hit that made the difference.

"Two really good pitchers going at it out there," said Edwardsville head coach Caty Happe, "and you knew you were going to have to score more than once. We did a great job in the seventh in getting kids on, extending at-bats throughout the game, and Brooke coming through with the hit, was huge. So awesome to see from her as a freshman."



The Tigers are 3-1 to start the season, and Happe is very happy with how things are going for her club thus far.

"We've played some really good ball clubs, and you know, any of the games could have gone in any direction," Happe said. "So, awesome to come out with some wins and see some really good pitching. Hopefully, it can give us some confidence going into the conference."

And with spring break coming up for Edwardsville, the Tigers have some big games coming up during that week, especially on the road. It's a challenge that Happe and her team are looking forward to.

"Yeah, we're excited to go travel a little bit," Happe said with a smile. "But, it'll be a fun spring break, and more time we can spend together."

Going into the game, Happe relied on a simple and effective strategy.

"Having tough at-bats," Happe said. "We knew we weren't going to hit her the entire game, but extending at-bats, seeing good pitches, and making good, hard contact. We did that at different points in the game and did it when we needed to, got kids on in the end, and we came through with the win."

Happe also gave credit to both Nelson and Gipson, who pitched well all day.

"Yeah, I mean, a seven-inning game went pretty quick with those two out there," Happe said. "So, both did a really good job, and I expect a good season this year."

The Tigers got on the board first in the home half of the second, when Jillian Lane singled, and went to second on a passed ball. After Madi Kolakowski singled Lane to third, Nelson hit a sacrifice fly to left, which was dropped, allowing Nelson to reach, and sending Kolakowski to second, scoring Lane to put Edwardsville up 1-0.

After allowing a two-out walk in the first, Nelson settled in and retired nine Miner batters in a row, with a two-out single by Gipson ending the string.

Gillespie drew level in the top of the fifth, with a lead-off single by Paxton Reid, Laci Schukenbrock was hit by a pitch to put runners on first and second and advanced on a sacrifice bunt by Delaney Taylor. Amari Vickrey then reached on a squeeze bunt in front of the plate that was called a fielder's choice, Reid scored on a sacrifice fly by Ava Parish to tie the game 1-1.

Gipson moved right along, retiring 11 in a row after the error gave the Tigers the lead.

Edwardsville threatened in the sixth, getting one-out singles from Burris and Grace Oertle, with Lane sacrificing Burris to third. Jillian Hawkes grounded to the third baseman, who made a great throw to the plate to get Burris to end the inning and keep the game tied.

Nelson singled to start the bottom of the seventh, going to second on a ground out to the second baseman, who ran to the bag for the out, with the first baseman out of position. Gipson then hit both Reese McNamara and Shelby Gorniak to load the bases, with Burris hitting the second pitch through shortstop, where the ball rolled through for the game-winning hit, scoring courtesy runner Amelia Wilson to give the Tigers a 2-1 win.

The Miners are now 4-1 on the young season, while Edwardsville goes to 3-2, and next plays Monday at home against Mascoutah, then visits Granite City on Tuesday, then Collinsville next Thursday, with all games starting at 4:30 p.m.

