



Eberlin Pitches Solid Five Innings, Beyers Smacks Home Run As Tigers Come Back To Top O'Fallon

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Sophomore Tony Eberlin overcame a slow start to pitch five very solid innings, striking out four, while sophomore Bryce Beyers hit his first-ever home run to lead off the sixth as Edwardsville bounced back to win their Southwestern Conference opener over O'Fallon 6-3 on the junior varsity turf field at the Edwardsville Sports Complex.

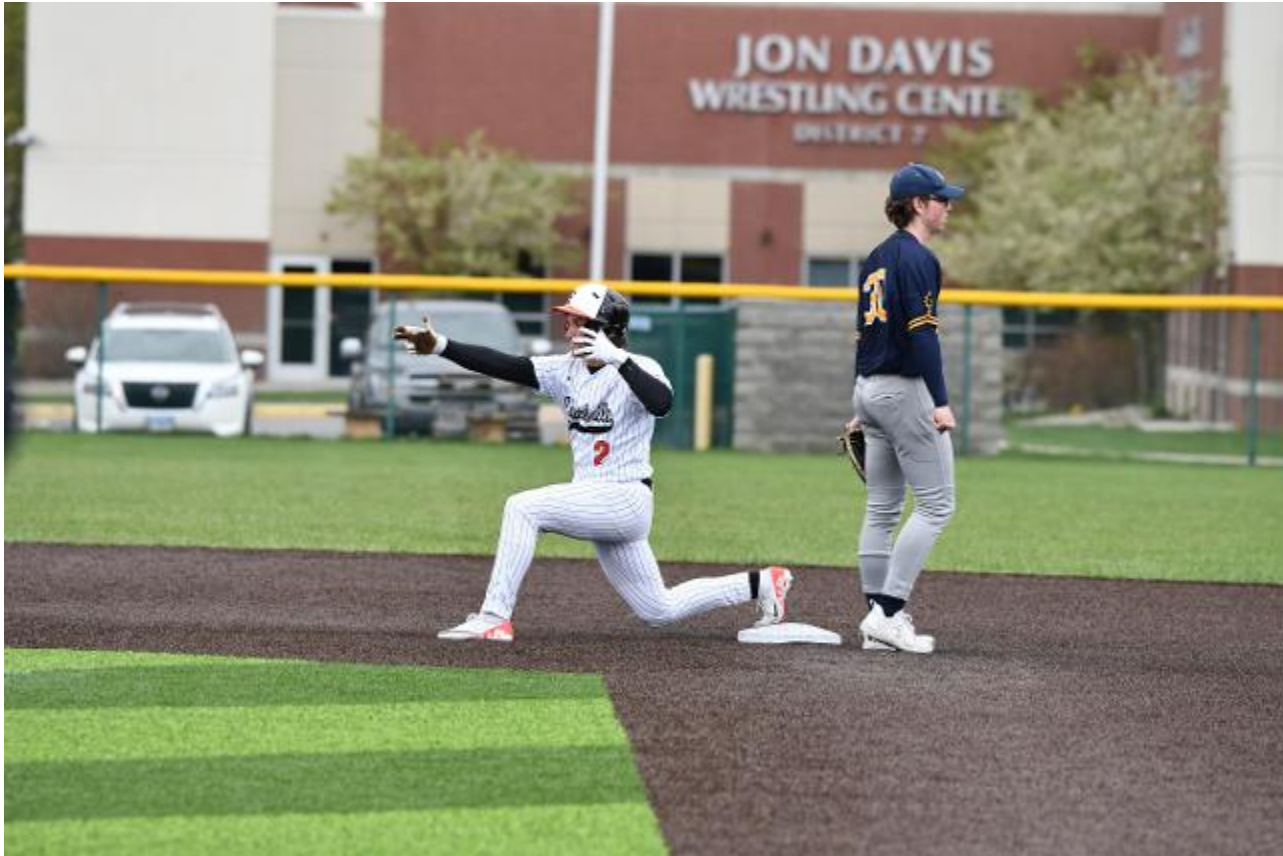
The game was moved from Tom Pile Field, due to wet grounds after severe thunderstorms went through the area Monday night into early Tuesday morning. A cold front also came through, which produced very windy and cold conditions, with Eberlin and his teammates overcoming the weather to take the win. It was a great bounce-back win for the Tigers after last week's trip to Hoover, Ala, where Edwardsville won only one of its four games on the trip.

"That was a good win for us," said Tigers' head coach Tim Funkhouser. "We've come off a couple of losses, and some really competitive games down there in Hoover. But to be back here, battle the elements, and have a tough pitcher on the mound, two starting pitchers lock horns."

"Then, I thought Chase Milburn was awesome in relief," Funkhouser continued. "So, I couldn't be more impressed with our guys, I thought Kolton Wright came away with that big base hit to plate a couple of runs and take the lead. Then Bryce Beyers got his first

home run to really add on to it. I thought our guys played really competitive defense, battling the elements, and everything involved. I thought we did a great job playing pitch-by-pitch."

One of the keys to the game was Eberlin's performance after overcoming a bad start when he gave up three runs to the first three batters of the game, including a two-run homer by Connor Blue. Eberlin settled in and scattered four hits, walking one and fanning four.





"That kid put a good swing on the ball (to) right-center," Funkhouser said, "and then, the other guy followed up with a good two-strike hit to right to get him in, and then (Blue) put enough of a swing, stayed inside of it enough, and the wind helped it a little bit. They got their three runs early, and for Tony to continue to get through the fifth against their lineup said a lot about him on a day where the conditions the way it is. Then, Chase Milburn did a great job, and slammed the door."

The Tigers improved to 5-4 overall, but most importantly, 1-0 in the conference as the SWC season got underway.

"Yeah, we've got a longer haul with that," Funkhouser said, "and with regionals, and everything like that. But every little win matters, and we're just trying to learn a little bit of ourselves each day. And the competitive schedule that myself and coach Bauer put together really helps prepare our guys, but it tests us a lot. So, sometimes, you don't need to be tested as much, but our guys have really been in that fire ever since we got going."

The Panthers started off with a lead-off single by Dane Hrasky, who scored on a base hit by Camden Cox to give O'Fallon a quick 1-0 lead, with Blue hitting his homer over the

fence in right-center to increase the lead to 3-0. Eberlin then settled down and retired the side. He also helped himself in the third by picking off Anthony Perez at first to end the third inning.

The Tigers led off the third with a walk to Hunter Baugh, who scored on a triple to the right-center field fence by Wright to make it 3-1. Evan Moore then singled home Wright to cut the lead to 3-2, and after Moore went to third on a ground out, stole the plate to tie the game 3-3.

The Tigers went ahead for good in the fourth, starting with a lead-off Greyson Rathgeb single, and after Rathgeb stole second, Max Waltenberger had an infield single to send Rathgeb to third. Baugh sacrificed Waltenberger to second, and Wright delivered the big hit, doubling to right to send home Rathgeb and Waltenberger, putting the Tigers up 5-3.

Eberlin kept rolling along, getting help from his defense, who made good plays, while catcher Lucas Huebner also threw out a runner trying to steal, keeping the score 5-3.

Beyers led off the Tiger sixth with his first career home run, clearing the fence in right to give Edwardsville a 6-3 lead, which Milburn preserved for the save, retiring all six batters he faced to earn the save and give Edwardsville a 6-3 win.

The Panthers are now 6-7 on the year, while the Tigers go to 5-4, with the same two teams facing off at Blazier Field on O'Fallon on Thursday at 4:30 p.m.

Edwardsville then hosts Francis Howell of Weldon Spring, Mo., in St. Charles County, on Friday, also at 4:30 p.m., then play their annual game at Busch Stadium against Parkway West of Creve Coeur, Mo., Sunday at approximately 5 p.m. following the conclusion of the game between the Miami Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals.

Edwardsville also announced that their postponed game against Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin Catholic will be played on April 10 at 4:30 p.m.



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