

Nail-Biter at Edwardsville Sports Complex Ends in 3-0 Effingham Girls Softball Win

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Effingham and Edwardsville engaged in a very tight and well-played pitcher's duel, as Saige Althoff of the Flaming Hearts and Riley Nelson of the Tigers, went toe-to-toe for five innings, with both giving up only one hit each. Effingham scored the game's only runs in the top of the six as the Hearts defeated Edwardsville 3-0 in a softball game played at the Edwardsville Sports Complex.

The game was moved up by 90 minutes in order to get the game in before storms that were predicted for late Thursday afternoon and early that evening rolled through the area.

Althoff and Nelson dueled for much of the game, with Effingham having only two hits, a first inning single by Raegan Boone, and a second inning single by Ryley Engle, while the Tigers managed to get a first inning walk to Grace Oertle, a third inning lead-off hit from Jillian Hawkes, and a fifth inning lead off single by Madi Kolakowski. None of the baserunner scored any runs as the game went into the sixth scoreless.





It all changed in the top of the sixth, when Alyssa Martin and Bria Beals led off with singles, then a sacrifice bunt attempt by Jerzi Bierman resulted in everyone being safe, loading the bases. A Sidney Donaldson sacrifice fly to left was misplayed, sending Martin in with the game's first run, with the bases still loaded. Natalie Armstrong singled home Beals, and a sacrifice fly to left scored Bierman to make it 3-0.

Althoff made the lead stand up, only allowing a walk to Brooke Burris in the bottom of the sixth, to give Effingham the win.

Kolakowski had two hits for the Tigers, while Hawkes had the other hit. Nelson went six innings in the circle, allowing three runs, two earned, on five hits, striking out three. Graham Cobb-Gulledge pitched a perfect seven inning.

Both Effingham and Edwardsville at 10-5 on the season, with the Tigers next playing Breese Mater Dei at home in a doubleheader, the first game starting at 10 a.m., then host Collinsville on Tuesday, are at Columbia Wednesday, and host Granite City next Thursday, with all games starting at 4:30 p.m.



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