

Edwardsville Beats Crusaders To Capture Second Straight State Title

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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JOLIET - The Tigers are seeing double.

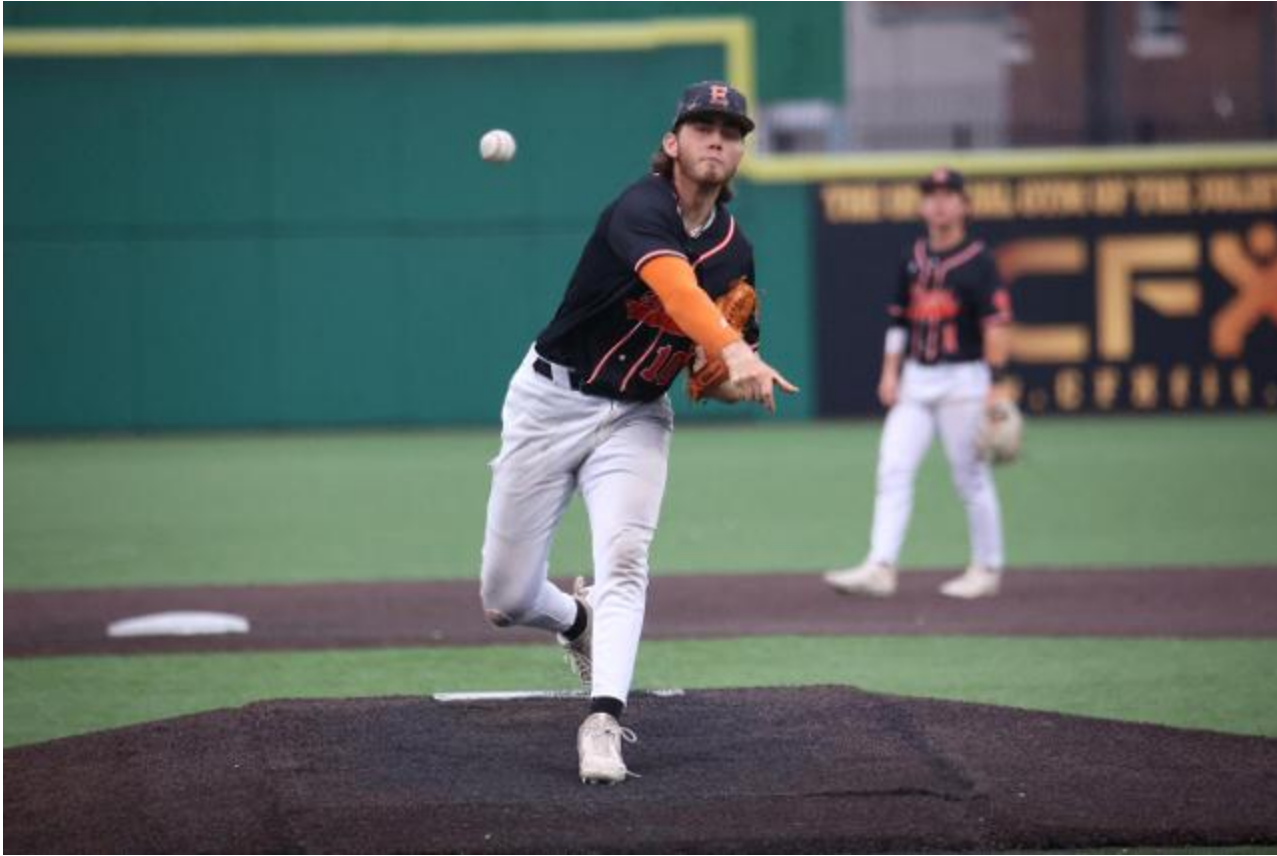
Edwardsville High School's baseball team defeated the Brother Rice Crusaders (26-16) in the Class 4A state championship by a score of 6-4 to secure back-to-back state titles for the program and its third in four years.

The story of this year's title game for the Tigers was pitching.

With ace Logan Geggus unavailable due to injury, Andrew Hendrickson was given the nod to start out on the mound, a decision he didn't find out about until 10 p.m. the night before.

"It's awesome; that's what baseball's all about," Hendrickson said. "I love the challenge, I love when it's games like this because you have to work for it."

"It was everything I wanted. I wanted to throw the whole game," he added.



Hendrickson threw four complete innings with four strikeouts, allowing two runs. After walking a batter and then giving up a single in the bottom of the fifth, the Tigers made the call to the bullpen.

In came closer Alec Marchetto.

He tossed the final three innings including striking out the side in the bottom of the sixth, finishing the game with six Ks.

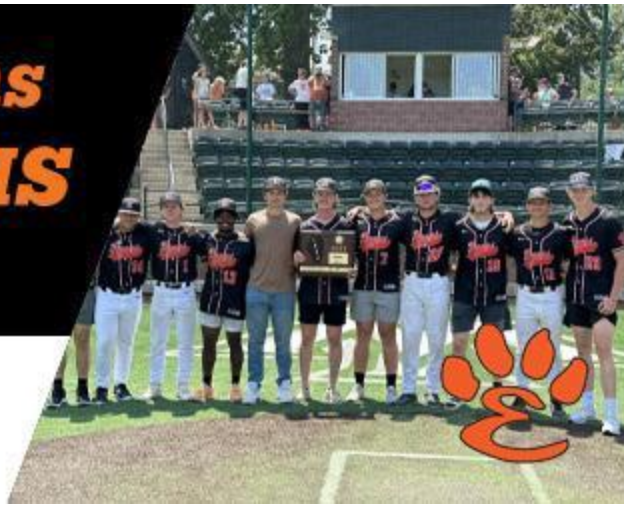
Marchetto knew he was going to get his chance with Gegguss out, and he delivered.

"I was just thinking I just had to come in and be a stopper," he said.

**Congratulations
& Good Luck EHS
Tigers!**



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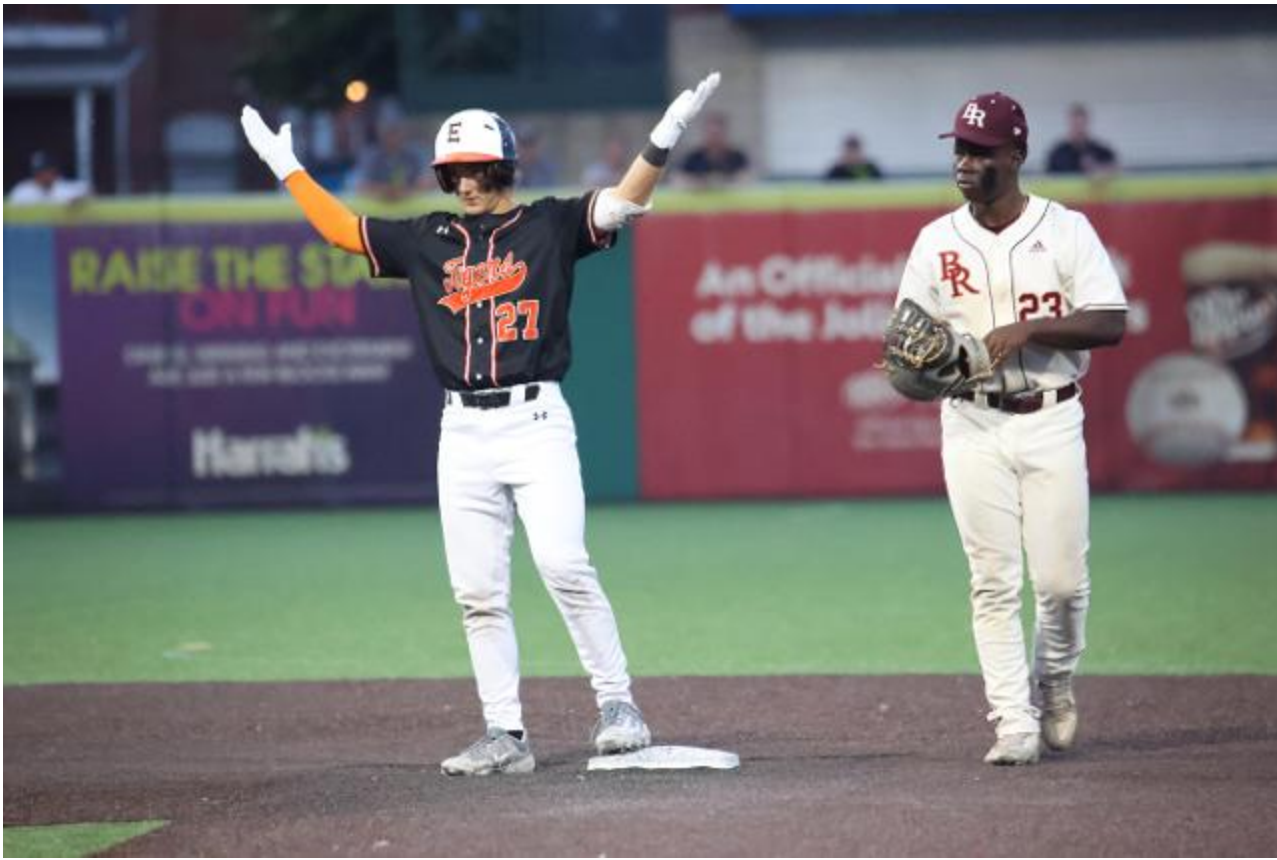


Offensively, Edwardsville once again wasted no time. After scoring five in the first inning of the state semifinal against York, the Tigers followed that up with a three-run first in the title game.

Cole Funkhouser swung on the first pitch of the game and drilled a single right up the gut. Riley Iffrig was walked and then Caeleb Copeland was hit by a pitch to load the bases with one out.

Hendrickson hit a sacrifice RBI to score Funkhouser before Lucas Huebner smacked a two-run single to score Iffrig and Copeland to go ahead 3-0.

Copeland made a nice diving catch in center field to close out the first inning, one of a few great defensive plays from Edwardsville over the weekend.



The Crusaders got on the board in the bottom of the second when Josh Sutker laced what would've been a triple down the first base line. He was tagged out trying to reach third, but it still scored Chris Daugherty who got on via a walk.

Brother Rice tacked another run on in the third inning when Danny Durkin hit an RBI single to make it 3-2.

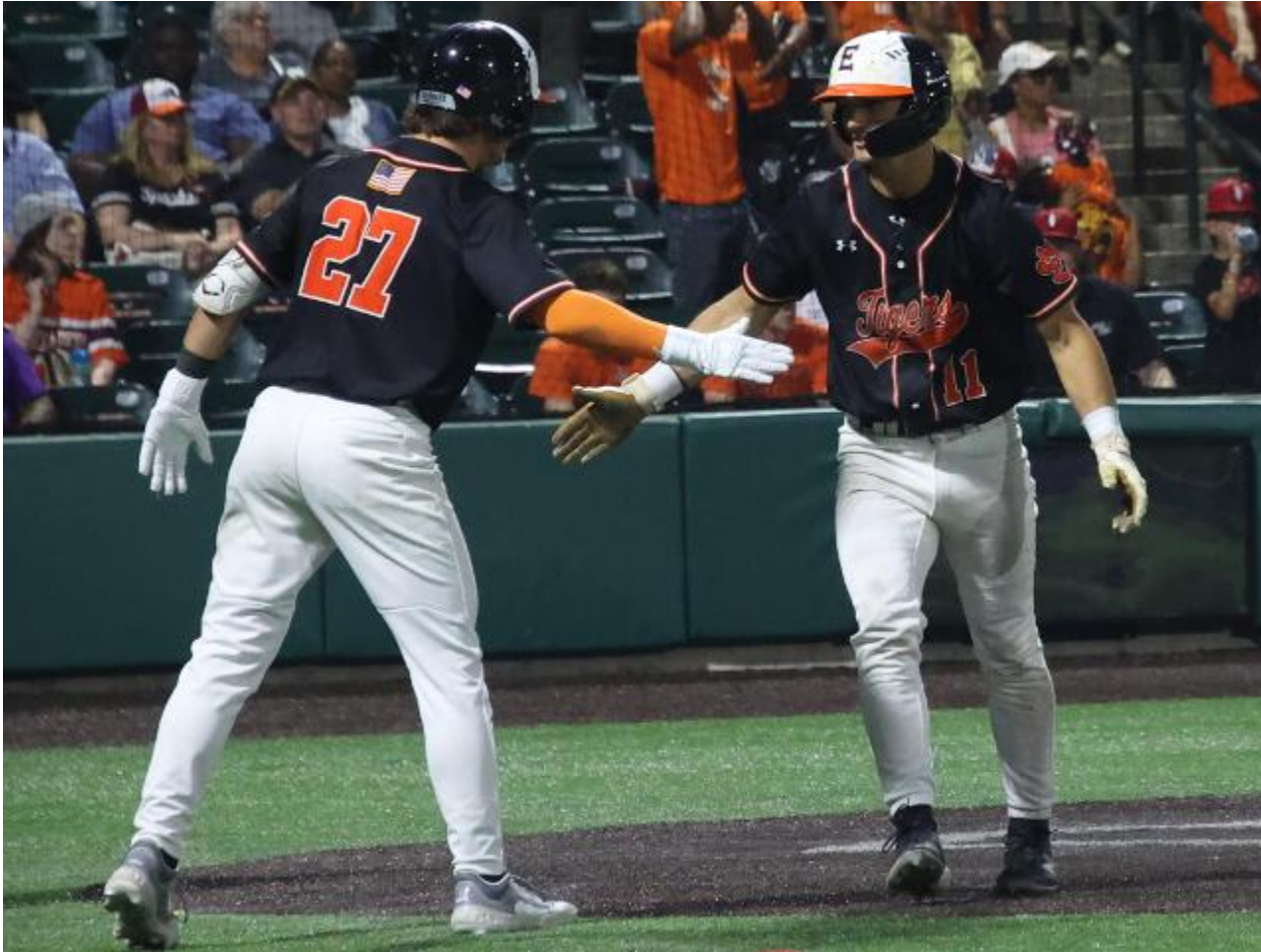
In what became a back-and-forth game, the Tigers responded with a run in the top of the fourth.

Lucas Krebs hit an RBI single that scored Kayden Jennings to boost the lead back up by two runs. Jennings got on base after being hit in the helmet by a pitch. Luckily, he was alright and stayed out on the base path.

After Hendrickson allowed the first two batters on, Marchetto came into the game in the bottom of the fifth, but faced some trouble.

Sean Sullivan stole third base, forcing a wild throw to the bag allowing him to go home and score. After that, Amir Gray hit a sacrifice RBI and just like that the game was tied back up at 4-4.

Edwardsville head coach Tim Funkhouser said he was never really worried about his team's response. He knew they had it in them.



"I don't tell them much during the course of the game. Our guys have been in the fight," he said. "It's one of those things where you stay out of their way and let them compete and it's a great feeling to have guys that you know can just go do."

The Tigers came back to score a run in each of the final two innings. Funkhouser hit an RBI single in the sixth and then Jennings hit an RBI double in the seventh to get to the eventual final scoreline of 6-4.

"Ultimately, this was a team effort," coach Funkhouser said of the weekend. "I'm so impressed with the way our guys competed."

The Tigers finish the year off having won the last 10 games straight, capping off a 33-9 season.