

Solid Pitching, Aggressive Batting Propel Tigers Over Alton

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Both Bryce Beyers and Greyson Rathgeb had three hits and two RBIs each, while Tony Eberlin pitched five very solid innings, striking out five, as Edwardsville defeated Alton for the second night in a row, 13-3, in a Southwestern Conference game at Tom Pile Field.

The Tigers ended the game via the 10-run rule by scoring six times, going along with a five-run second that put Edwardsville up for good. The Tigers got contributions from almost everyone in taking the win.

"I feel good about the way our guys competed," said Edwardsville coach Tim Funkhouser. "Tony's last outing wasn't as sharp against Collinsville, after he had several starts before that, in that he was really throwing well. It was good for him to bounce back today, and really show some good things. And then, offensively, I thought yesterday, man, that pitcher really made it hard on us, and our pitcher did a great job as well. I thought that, today, we did a great job of adjusting during at-bats, and put some better swings on balls. There were multiple contributors in the lineup, so that was fun to see."



Will Downs saw his first action after being out with injury, and had a great day, having two hits and scoring three times.

"You look at two guys on our team that didn't have an opportunity to play last year, because of injury," Funkhouser said. "and that was Ethan Stewart, one of our pitchers that has been clutch in some conference games. let alone non-conference games. But he's pitched outstanding. And then, Will Downs. They were out with arm injuries last year, couldn't play for us, and Will's just continued to compete. Today, he laid own that bunt early on, and that was in the second inning, placed a good bunt, which was a tougher play. And sure enough, he was able to drive a ball later in the game, and just take good at-bats to get on base again. So, you'd love to have that depth on our team. All of our guys practice hard, and they really put in the time in the weight room, etc. So, when you see a guy that doesn't get consistent at-bats go up there, and do what he did today, it's really rewarding to see that, You're glad that he's rewarded."

It was indeed a well-deserved reward for his hard work on the practice field, especially in the very difficult circumstances.

"Yeah, it's fun," Funkhouser said. "Even some of our guys, a Hunter Baugh, I'm not sure if he had a hit today, but I loved his at-bats. So, it's not always getting that result, but it's the process in it. So, some of our guys are really getting closer. Lucas Huebner with that base hit there, towards the end of the game, driving in some runners, just a nice, solid swing. And our guys, it's fun to see them rewarded for the hard work they've put in."

The Redbirds, who are now 14-10, have been enjoying a good season, and the team continues to compete and hang in there.

"Well, I wish we were able to compete a little bit better," said Alton coach Scott Harper. "They did a good job of swinging the bats, we struggled with being competitive enough with enough pitches, and not being able to mix things up. They were able to put the ball in play, found some holes, and then, the put the finishing touches on in the end."

The Redbirds have been enjoying a successful season thus far, and have worked hard to achieve their goals.

"Oh, yeah," Harper said. "We've had a good start, and a lot of things went our way early. We knew we'd have challenges when we got to the conference. You're going to face top pitching, and top offenses. So, we've come up a little bit short a few games down the stretch, but we'll just keep working at it, and find a way."

The Redbirds have always been a very hard working side, and it's a very good trademark of the club.

"Well, sure," Harper said. "These guys put in the time to get better, so we've just got to keep working at the challenges that are there. We're going to face adversity; baseball's a game of adversity, and a game of failures, and we've just got to keep working through."

Alton got on the board first in the top of the second, starting with a lead-off double from Will Weirich, who went to third on a successful sacrifice bunt by Alex Siatos, then scored on a sacrifice fly to left, scoring Weirich and putting the Redbirds up 1-0.

Back-to-back lead-off walks to Rathgeb and Max Waltenberger opened the home half of the second, with Beyers delivering a RBI single to score Rathgeb and tie the game 1-1. A bunt by Baugh back to the box, with Waltenberger beating the toss back to the plate to score and give Edwardsville the lead at 2-1. Beyers going to second. A hit by Downs loaded the bases for Evan Moore, who delivered a bases-clearing double to left, scoring all three runners and giving the Tigers a 5-1 lead.

Edwardsville extended its lead to 7-1 in the fourth on back-to-back RBI singles by Wright and Lucas Krebs, then in the top of the sixth, a grounder to third by Logan Hickman turned into a two-run error when the third baseman threw too high, allowing Hickman to reach and both Weirich and Aaron Wooten to score and make it 7-3.

Edwardsville got the runs back in the home half, when Huebner single home both Wright and Downs to put Edwardsville in front 9-3. Rathgeb doubled home two more runs to make it 11-3, Rathgeb later scored on a wild pitch, then Beyers singled home Tyler Powell with the game-ending run as the Tigers won 13-3.

The Redbirds next play Father McGivney Catholic in a very rare Sunday afternoon game at Redbirds Field, with a 1 p.m. start time. Alton is also at Waterloo Gibault Catholic on Monday, and plays a two-game series against Collinsville on Tuesday and next Thursday, the first game at home, and the return game at Collinsville, with all games starting at 4:30 p.m.

The Tigers are now 14-6, and play their annual game at Busch Stadium on Sunday against Parkway West at 5 p.m., then play a two-game set against Belleville West, Tuesday at home, and Thursday at West, both games starting at 4:30 p.m.



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