

LANCER BASEBALL

Belleville East Student Newspaper

By: Steven Stock



It's that time of year again: the weather is beautiful, school is almost out, and outdoor sports are back at East. The Lancers' baseball team is looking to make it back-to-back Regional Championship this season. Last year, they defeated Belleville West, 5-4 to win their 19th regional championship in program history. They would eventually lose to the IHSA State Champions, Edwardsville Tigers in the Sectional Semi-final.

From last season, the Lancers returned numerous seniors and with a combination of new underclassmen. They are ready to make another playoff push in a few weeks. The

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Lancers currently sit 16-9 and have had some big games this season with still many huge contests to go.

A unique part of this season is the Lancers took a trip down to Hoover, Alabama for a weekend to play four games there. Head Baseball Coach Ryan Wiggs told me it was something that came to fruition in the offseason, “I saw it on social media that they had open spots and reached out to our great athletic department and administration wondering if we could make it possible. They were in support of it and we were able to make the trip”. The Lancers left for Alabama at a record of 5-1 and came back home 6-4, going 1-3 on the road trip. While the trip may have been disappointing, the Lancers faced some very solid teams from Alabama, Tennessee, and Utah. They played all these games close, losing two of the three by one run and the other by two.

After their return, things started to get better for the Lancers beginning an eleven game stretch of going 9-2. Coach Wiggs said after one of the victories, “We haven’t been thinking of our record or the victories, we’re focused on going to practice trying to get better. Once we got back from Alabama, the players have set this tone of trying to improve every day and they have been doing that”. During that 9-2 stretch, the Lancers swept their cross-town rival, Belleville West, throwing a combined no-hitter by Ty Reaka and Dawson Vernier against Centralia, sweeping Alton, and sweeping a doubleheader against Carbondale. The Lancers sat 16-7 going into this previous week where they had big games against O’Fallon, Gibault, and Eureka.

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The Lancers took on the Panthers of O'Fallon on the road last Tuesday (4/25) losing 2-1. The offense was unable to get anything going behind a strong performance by Owen Kelly and Dylan Mannino. They returned home the next day with a game versus Gibault, who gave them a run for their money. Ty Reaka pitched a no-hitter into the sixth, and after stranding runners in scoring position in the 7th, the game went to extra innings. During the top of the eighth, Gibault had their best at-bats of the game, especially a quality at-bat from Brady Biffar who drove in the go-ahead RBI to give the Hawks the lead. However, it would not last for long as Pat Mendiola tied it on a game-tying triple. Nolan Senecyzn then drove in the winning run on a sacrifice fly to deliver the Lancers their first walk-off win of the season.

Unfortunately, the offense would stay cold against O'Fallon on Friday losing 3-1 behind a stellar outing from Dylan Mannino backing up Zander Meuth. On Sunday, the Lancers fell to a really good Eureka team, 9-1. Now, the Lancers must find a way to get out of a slump they've been in before. They currently sit at 16-9, a record some may view as disappointing going back to the expectations for this bunch coming in. However, they are still right where they need to be. With three weeks left before the postseason, the Lancers still have dates with Althoff, Edwardsville, Collinsville, and more to get better. They have shown in the past how good they can be when the offense is clicking, especially at the top of the order with Joe and Pat Mendiola, Ean DiPasquale, and Caleb Guthrie. If the Lancers can peak going into the last few weeks, a deep postseason run is very possible with the veteran talent they possess.