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## Sports

# Oak Hill triumphs over Eastbrook in CIC opener

By Sean Douglas

If there is one word to describe the Oak Hill Golden Eagles in the 2021 baseball season, it's resilience.

They have committed far too many errors for Head Coach Shane Edwards' liking, and a lack of energy early in some of their contests have led to some large early deficits.

However, no matter the deficit they may face, the Golden Eagles battle consistently from the first pitch to the final swing, and in their CIC opener against Eastbrook, their resilience was on full display.

Trailing by scores of 8-0 and 9-3 early in the contest, Oak Hill came roaring back in the bottom of the seventh frame as a bases loaded walk, a grand slam by junior Evan Pearce, and a walkoff double by Keegan Deaton lifted the Golden Eagles to a thrilling 10-9 triumph over the Panthers.

"That's our third walkoff in four games," Edwards said. "We are grinding, and we are fighting. If we can fix [our errors] and come out less flat, we could be really special."

With the Golden Eagles trailing 9-4, Tyler Rennaker, who pitched brilliantly in relief after Eastbrook grabbed its early advantage, began the rally with a single to right field. Kian Hite followed with

a walk, and Drew Wagner reached on a single, loading the bases with one out. Senior Mark Sevier drove in a run on a bases-loaded walk, setting the table for the ever-dangerous Pearce.

Throughout his high-school career, regardless of the sport he is playing, Pearce has been at his best when the game is on the line, and he proved that once again against Eastbrook.

After a questionable second strike, Edwards called timeout to talk with Pearce and give him a few pointers.

And for the junior, that's all he needed.

"He is always telling me to be where my feet are, stay in the moment, and focus on the next pitch," Pearce said. "[On that second strike,] I thought it was outside, and he said, 'Did that pitch get you out?' And I was like, 'No, no it didn't.' Then he said, 'Well, then be where your feet are, focus, and just get us a base hit.' I just saw the pitch and I swung."

With a mammoth swing of the bat, Pearce launched a moonshot to deep left field, clearing the fence with ease and sending the Oak Hill dugout into a frenzy. The grand slam tied the contest at 9-9, and put the Golden Eagles in control.

"I want to be the one that helps my team the biggest



Evan Pearce hit the game-tying grand slam in the bottom of the seventh inning to highlight Oak Hill's remarkable comeback. **Photo by Sean Douglas**

way I can," Pearce said. "A big thing I've learned here since I've been at Oak Hill... is doing whatever I can do to help the team. That's what I try to do."

"I'm glad he wears the blue and gold," Edwards added. "It's a nice weapon for us to have on our side of the diamond."

Three batters later, after Aidan Hardcastle drew a four-pitch walk, Deaton crushed the game-winning double to deep right-center field, capping off the improbable comeback and securing the Golden Eagles' first conference win of the season.

Eastbrook certainly did not make it easy for Oak Hill, however, jumping out to an

eight-run lead in the first three innings due mostly to the red-hot bat of Luke Shearer. The Panthers' catcher hit back-to-back three run shots in the first two frames, knocking Deaton from the game in the process and had Eastbrook in control in the contest's early stages.

"Luke has been really good for us, and he's calling a heck of a game behind the plate," Brown said. "He's hustling down the line. He's popping up on the pop flies trying to see whatever he can get. He's swinging really well, he's calling a good game behind the plate, and he's taking command. It's nice to have him out here. He's a big part of what we are doing."

However, after Shearer's second shot, Rennaker, a usual starter who came into the game in relief, found his groove. He gave up just two runs after Eastbrook's four-run second frame, striking out nine batters and scattering six hits to earn the win.

"I thought he threw extremely well," Edwards said of Rennaker. "He was behind early, but then all of the sudden, he settled in."

As the game progressed, Oak Hill gained confidence, while Eastbrook lost its aggressive edge.

Eastbrook Head Coach Ryne Brown claimed the resulting complacency was the most definitive reason for the Panthers' eventual loss.

"We played a really good game, but they are a really good team," Brown said. "The difference was we let off the gas. Defensively, we held our own, we didn't make any major mistakes, but they hit the ball. It was only a matter of time. They are always going to hit the ball. Coach Edwards always has these guys ready to hit."

"At the plate, we let off the gas," Brown said. "We started watching strikes go by where we were aggressive early in the game. We were trying to guess at pitches. We got content, and that's what happens when you get content against a really good team."

Along with Pearce's grand slam, Hardcastle finished 2-for-3, including a solo shot in the sixth inning, while Rennaker also finished 2-for-3 with a pair of singles. Deaton, along with his game-winning double, also collected an RBI groundout in the third, while Sam Stefanatos finished 1-for-4 with an RBI double.

For Eastbrook, Shearer led all players with two home runs and six RBI, while Jett Engle finished 1-for-3 with a solo home run.

While he hopes that his team will eventually cut down on the mistakes, Edwards is proud of the heart and determination that his team has shown all season long.

"How can a coach be upset at what we are doing right now?" Edwards said. "Our kids are grinding through and getting wins when we probably didn't deserve them. We are just finding ways to get wins. I'm happy, but I know we can be better."

And for Eastbrook, Brown and the Panthers are just focusing on their next opponent.

"We've got a hard practice tomorrow, and then we've got a doubleheader Saturday," Brown said. "There isn't a whole lot of time. We are going to go make some tweaks and see if we can work on a few things and be ready to go Saturday."

# Trojans wrap up season series with Goshen in Doubleheader Sweep

By Sean Douglas

Maddi Evans continued to make history, the bats continued to hum, and RV Taylor secured a series sweep of Goshen with a pair of victories at Gudakunst Field on Friday. The Trojans won the first contest, 10-2, in five innings, before recording a 5-3 triumph in the nightcap.

In four innings of work in the opener, Evans (15-3) pitched brilliantly, carrying a perfect game through three frames and allowing only two runs, one walk, and one hit, all of which came in the fourth inning. With her victory in the circle, the



Alexi Clay finished with three runs batted in a pair of pinch hitting situations to lead Taylor's offense in its doubleheader sweep of Goshen on Friday.

junior tied Hannah Klebsadel (2014) and teammate Lauren Kanai (2018) for the second most wins for a

Trojan pitcher in a single season. The junior needs just three more wins to tie former Taylor standout

Hannah Robbins, who collected 18 victories in the circle in both 2014 and 2017.

The Trojans, as a unit, put together another stout offensive performance, batting .409 (18-of-44) with 15 runs scored and four extra-base hits. Emma West went 4-for-6 with two runs scored and one run batted in, while Aleyah Rastetter continued to swing a red-hot bat, hitting her seventh home run of the season, a three-run bomb, in the opener.

Alexi Clay also had a strong day at the plate, batting 2-for-2 in a pair of pinch-hitting situations and driving in three runs, including two crucial in-

surance tallies in the fifth inning of game two. Additionally, Kara Tucker collected two hits and two RBI, while Evans, Kristin Mihalic, Ashton Whitman, and Taylor Wilson each recorded two knocks apiece.

Taylor did a majority of its damage in the second inning of game one, scoring seven of its 10 runs on five hits and one Goshen error. Whitman started the scoring by drawing a bases-loaded walk, before a Caitlyn Grim sacrifice fly to center, a West RBI single, and a Tucker sacrifice fly to right increased the Trojans' advantage to 4-0. Rastetter followed with her fourth home run

in her last five contests, giving the Trojans a 7-0 lead after two innings of play.

Goshen got two runs back in the top of the fourth frame, but the Trojans scored three more runs in the bottom half of the inning to secure the run-rule victory. Nicole Brindle and Mihalic scored on a Goshen fielding error, before Clay plated Wilson with an RBI single for the final tally.

The Maple Leafs scored the first run of the nightcap in the top of the first inning, but the Trojans took the lead for good with a pair of runs in the bottom half of the frame.

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