

Monday's results

MLB

White Sox.....6
Indians.....3

Yankees 1
Orioles.....6

Phillies 20
Rockies5

NHL

Penguins..... 0
Red Wings.....3

NBA

Celtics.....75
Pistons..... 94

Illini fall short of season goals

Coach Hartleb begins search for athletes, arms

BY STEVE CONTORNO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

All season, head coach Dan Hartleb has said his team shows resilience in the face of adversity. Trailing Indiana 9-1 in the seventh inning and facing elimination from the Big Ten Tournament, Illinois nearly pulled off an improbable comeback, scoring six runs in the top of the seventh and eighth to pull within two. But it just wasn't meant to be.

"I thought we had Indiana on the ropes," Hartleb said. "We did a great job of battling. It was absolutely the most fun watching this team play baseball."

Indiana scored five runs in the bottom half of the eighth to end Illinois' hopes of moving further into the tournament. For the second year in a row, the Illini bowed out after their third game, ending a season of ups and downs far from the team's goal of making the NCAA regionals.

"Everyone is very disappointed," Hartleb said. "We're at the point where everyone in this program expects to get to the Big Ten Tournament. I think these guys wanted more than that, but we played hard all week as we have all season."

Senior Ryan Hastings didn't leave the program the way he would have liked, but he did end the season displaying the grit that defined his time at Illinois. The first baseman led both of Illinois' late rallies, starting the seventh with a walk and the eighth with a single. He finished the day, and his career, 3-for-4 with two runs and an RBI.

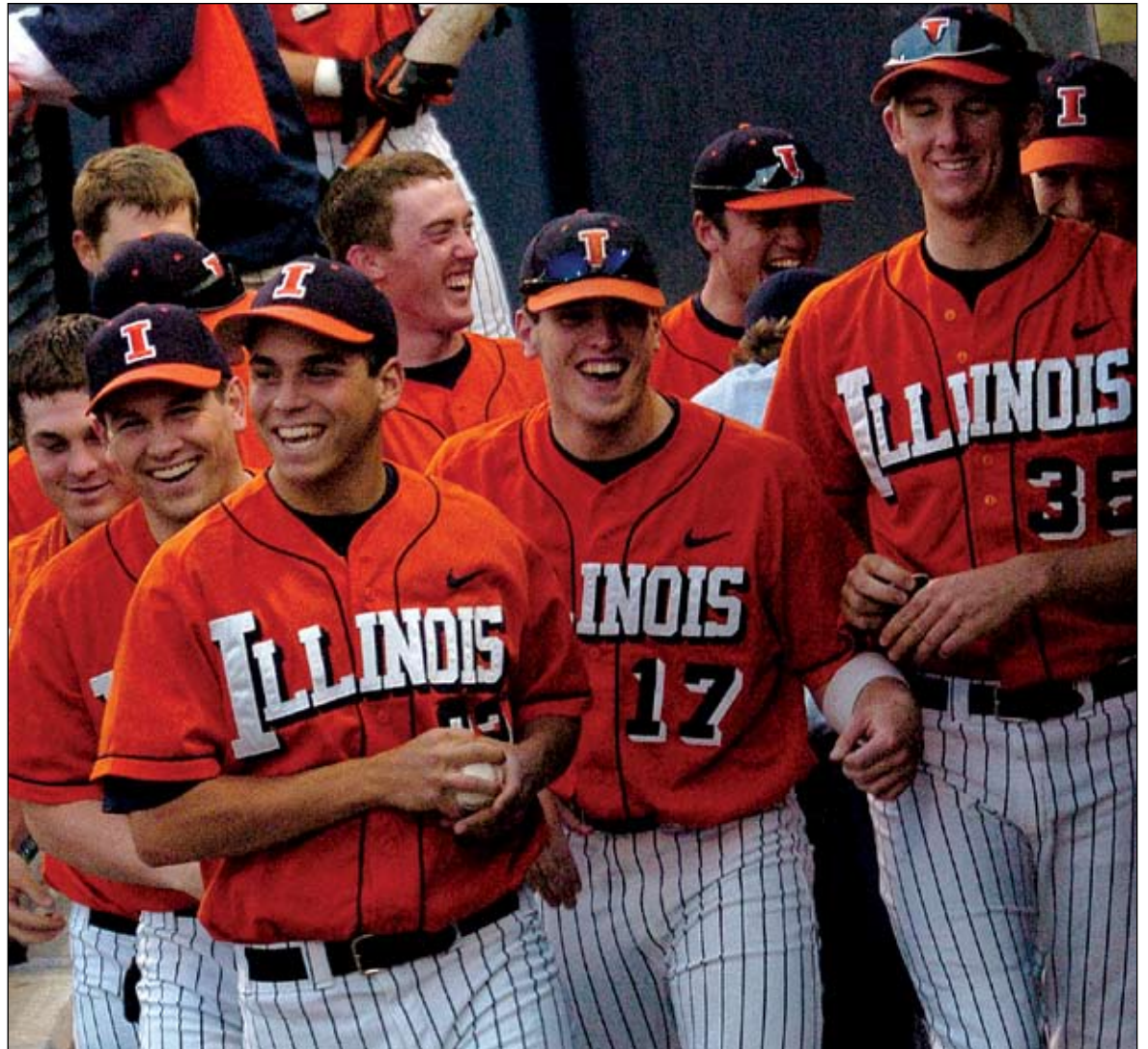
"It was a fun ride and I'm glad I had the opportunity to play ball," Hastings said. "It's a little bittersweet because I think we could've had a better showing at this tournament."

Illinois will quickly turn things around and begin life after Hastings and fellow senior Daniel Webb. Hartleb plans to spend the next few months looking for replacements for his departing athletes.

"We'll hit the road recruiting immediately," Hartleb said. "We don't have the time to take a step back from the game or take some time off. There's a lot of work to be done. We have to evaluate ourselves and the talent out there and work to make ourselves a better ball club."

After a season in which inconsistent pitching held back one of the nation's top hitting teams — posting a 6.44 ERA to offset the team's 7.23 runs per game — it's no secret that Hartleb would like to add a few more pitchers to his arsenal.

"Every year you try to add good athletes and add some good arms," Hartleb said. "Obviously, our guys need to improve. Our young pitch-



JEREMY BERG THE DAILY ILLINI

The Illinois baseball team celebrates in the dugout after Joe Bonadonna successfully steals home plate before the pitcher delivered the pitch during the game against Western Illinois on April 23. The Illini's season ended after losing to Indiana.

ers made some strides and they need to continue to make strides. It's frustrating at times because there's no consistency. We need to have consistency in their work habits and their progress physically and mentally."

Outside of the departing seniors, junior outfielder Kyle Hudson could be absent from next year's roster as well. Hudson is projected to be selected in the Major League Baseball amateur player draft, set to be held June 5. His prospects of rejoining the Illini in 2009 diminished as the year progressed and Hudson's batting average, on-base percentage, runs per game and stolen bases all ranked among the national leaders.

"Kyle will have a pretty good opportunity when it all unfolds," Hartleb said. "Of course, we would love to have him back, but we'll just have to watch it all play out."

In the meantime, Hartleb will also be doing something unfathomable to most Illinois fans — cheering for Michigan. But the Illini skipper has good reason to pull for the Wolverines, who head into the

Manson named to All-Big Ten Tournament team

Kevin Manson pitched like one of the Big Ten's best last Wednesday, and the conference honored him for it Saturday night. Manson, who threw a complete game against Ohio State in the conference tournament opener, was named to the All-Big Ten Tournament team for his efforts. Of the four pitchers selected for the team, Manson was the only hurler not from Michigan. The Wolverines won the Big Ten Tournament.

After the game, Manson said he enjoyed playing on such a pressure-filled stage as just a sophomore.

"I wasn't as pumped as I thought I would be," Manson said. "I was a little more relaxed which I didn't expect. I was pretty calm and collective."

In his outing, Manson allowed just four hits to lead his team to a 3-2 win against the Buckeyes. Neither of the runs he allowed were earned. The Park Ridge, Ill., native also struck out four and did not allow any free passes, demonstrating his ability to effectively spots. Nearly 70 percent of his pitches were strikes.

Manson becomes the first Illini to be named to the all-tournament team since Shawn Roof in 2005 and adds the award to the third-team All-Big Ten honor he received at the conclusion of the regular season.



MANSON

NCAA tournament after sweeping both conference titles.

"Of course you have your rivalries, but when it comes to Big Ten teams playing outside the conference and especially in the NCAA tournament, we need to root for

them," Hartleb said. "Their presence at that level makes the Big Ten stronger in terms of exposure and recruiting. Of course you want Illinois to win, but when it doesn't affect Illinois it's good for the Big Ten."