

Down but never out, baseball finds way to win



JEREMY BERG THE DAILY ILLINI

Illinois' Dominic Altobelli fields a ground ball against St. Louis on April 2. Altobelli and the Illini took three of four games at Indiana in a series that wrapped up Monday.

Four-run ninth, 9-run fourth help club take Indiana series

BY JASON GRODSKY
SENIOR WRITER

Opposing teams are learning firsthand about Illinois' never-quit mentality.

Trailing early in two of the four games at Indiana, the Illini put their never-quit attitude to the test, using two big innings at the plate to come from behind to beat the Hoosiers in both the series opener and finale.

Illinois (17-8, 6-2 Big Ten) scored four runs in the top of the ninth to overcome a three-run deficit against Indiana (14-12, 3-5) and earn a 8-7 win on Saturday. The team then plastered a nine-spot on the scoreboard in the fourth inning of Monday's series finale to overcome a one-run deficit to beat the Hoosiers 18-8 and clinch the series win.

"We don't let the score affect us," head coach Dan Hartleb said. "Our guys are confident every time we go to the plate and take the field that we're going to win. When you have good teams they always believe they are going to win, and those are the teams that make comebacks."

Hartleb dates the team's resiliency back to its final Big Ten series last season against Michi-

Hot start in Big Ten

Illinois is off to its best start in Big Ten play since 2005 — the last time it was crowned Big Ten Champion.

The 6-2 Illini are in second place in the Big Ten and have won back-to-back conference series for the first time since beating Iowa and Minnesota in late April 2006.

Illinois is 15-4 since heading to Bradenton, Fla., for its spring break trip. The Illini will stay on the road to play Bradley in Peoria on Tuesday at 6 p.m. A win against the Braves would match the Illini's best 20-game stretch since 2000, when that team went 16-4.

Jayhawks grind their way to title over Tigers in overtime thriller

Missed FTs open door for Kansas to force OT

BY EDDIE PELLIS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN ANTONIO — So patient for 20 years, Kansas had no problem working an extra five minutes to bring a long-awaited championship back to the heartland.

Mario Chalmers hit a three-pointer with 2.1 seconds left in regulation to push the game into overtime, and the Jayhawks grinded it out from there for a 75-68 victory Monday night over Memphis in one of the best title games in recent memory.

Chalmers' shot pulled Kansas into a tie after being down nine with 2:12 left.

"We got the ball in our most clutch

player's hands, and he delivered," Kansas coach Bill Self said.

It was the first title for Kansas since 1988, when Danny Manning, now an assistant coach for the Jayhawks, led them to an upset of Oklahoma. And the shot earned Chalmers the most outstanding player honor.

"I had a good look at it," Chalmers said. "When it left my hands it felt like it was good, and it just went in."

The most memorable performance in this one came from freshman Derrick Rose of Memphis, who completely took over the game in the second half, scoring 14 of his team's 16 points during one stretch to lift the Tigers to a 60-51 lead with 2:12 left.

But Kansas (37-3) used the strategy any smart opponent of Memphis' would — fouling the heck out of one of the country's worst free-throw-shooting teams — and when Rose and

Chris Douglas-Roberts combined to miss four of five over the last 1:12, it left the door open for KU.

Hustling the ball down the court with 10.8 seconds left and no timeouts, Sheron Collins handed off to Chalmers at the top of the three-point line and Chalmers took the shot. It hit nothing but net and tied the score at 63.

Robert Dozier missed a desperation shot at the buzzer, and Rose went limping to the bench, favoring his right leg. Brandon Rush, Darrell Arthur and Darnell Jackson scored the first six points of overtime to put Kansas ahead 69-63. Memphis, clearly exhausted, didn't pull within three.

Arthur was dominant inside, finishing with 20 points and 10 rebounds, lots of dunks and easy layups off lob passes. Chalmers finished with 18 points.



MARK HUMPHREY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kansas' Darrell Arthur dunks the ball as Memphis' Robert Dozier, right, plays defense during Monday's championship game in San Antonio. The Jayhawks defeated the Tigers 75-68.

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It's official: Gordon announces IU departure, enters NBA draft

Crean potentially to replace all five of team's starters

BY MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana freshman Eric Gordon is entering the NBA draft.

While he has not yet signed with an agent, his father, Eric Gordon Sr., said he intended to sign with one, which would officially end his college eligibility.

The move was expected long before Gordon made the announcement Monday. When he joined the Hoosiers, many people predicted the 6-foot-4 guard with the nifty moves and NBA 3-point range would go straight to the league after one college season. He's projected as a top-10 pick.

"I'm doing this to compete at the highest level, not for the fame or the money," Gordon said during a news conference. "I just had a couple of weeks to really think about this after the season, and now is the right time to do it."

Gordon, a third-team All-American, is the second member of the heralded 2008 freshman class to declare for the draft, joining Arizona's Jerryd Bayless. Those who have not yet announced whether they will turn pro include centers Michael Beasley of Kansas State and Kevin Love of UCLA, both first-team All-Americans; Memphis guard Derrick Rose, a third-team All-

American; and guard O.J. Mayo of Southern Calif., who was an honorable mention choice on the All-American list.

Gordon led the Big Ten in scoring (20.9 points), set school and Big Ten freshman scoring records with 669 points, and made the third most free throws by a Hoosier in a single season (231). He also tied Mike Woodson's school record for most 30-point games by a freshman (three) and won the conference's freshman player of the year award.

But after injuring his left wrist during a practice in late January, Gordon was not the

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"I'm doing this to compete at the highest level, not for the fame or the money."

ERIC GORDON
Indiana guard



BRAD VEST THE DAILY ILLINI

Indiana's Eric Gordon shoots the ball against the Illini at Assembly Hall on Feb. 7. Gordon intends to leave Indiana and enter the NBA, although he hasn't signed with an agent yet.

BASEBALL 101

Proof why Barry isn't the best of all time



DAVE FULTZ
Sports columnist

I've been blessed with a gem for this week's column — Barry Bonds still doesn't have a team and nobody seems to miss him. Teams have been scared of signing the slugger thanks to the constant steroid allegations and ongoing federal perjury case against him. This has fueled a new argument that I'd be glad to get involved in.

If Bonds is done — and his career over — where does he stand among the all-time greats?

Even though Bonds' career numbers were probably inflated by his off-the-field exploits, I'm going to present an argument used by many to prove that Bonds still isn't the greatest player of all time.

The funny part is, he's not even number two.

Now, in order to make this argument, I'm going to have to introduce yet another statistic that is popular in the realm of sabermetrics.

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Tennessee, Stanford to face off in Tampa Bay for women's NCAA championship

Parker, Wiggins hope winning national title becomes final image of their college careers

BY DOUG FEINBERG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TAMPA, Fla. — Candace Parker and Candice Wiggins made memorable first impressions on each other when they met on a basketball court as kids. Both hope the final snapshot from their stellar college careers will include a national championship.

"We were in a 13-year-and-under AAU tournament in Florida, actually. She was like 6-

foot-2 at 12," Wiggins said. "I remember being just like, wow, because she was different then. There's nobody in the game like her. I think she's carrying all the pressure and all of that really well and I really respect her for that."

The feeling is mutual.

Parker led Tennessee to its seventh national title a year ago and will try to help the Lady Vols become the first repeat champs since Connect-

icut won three straight from 2002-04, when they meet Stanford on Tuesday night for the championship.

"I remember watching her play when we were in eighth grade and we were watching the championship national game," Parker said. "She was a ball of energy, always moving. I think she's a great leader for her team and she really inspires by her play."

While Parker clearly has raised the profile of her sport with her talent and persona, Wiggins has quietly led Stanford back to its first Final Four

in 11 years.

"I understand what Candace Parker is to women's basketball. She's a very prominent figure, a prominent face, and I don't expect any of that to change," Wiggins said. "I don't really see myself as 'the other Candice,' but I definitely understand the exposure that she gives to women's basketball."

Wiggins has done much for Stanford in four years but kept her humility.

"She almost acts so surprised about everything, to be the USA Basketball player of the year, and if anyone saw her

when she got the Wade she was shocked," Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer said. "She really is just very real and down to earth and it's really fun to see someone with that kind of demeanor to have all these great things happen to them."

The spotlight, of course, will be on the two stars, but the title might well be settled by others.

"We both realize we've got great support around us and I think that's what it really comes down to," Wiggins said.

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