

Monday's results

MLB

Cubs.....	7
Astros.....	2
Royals.....	0
Red Sox.....	7
Phillies.....	0
Nationals.....	4
MLB	
Red Wings.....	4
Stars.....	0

# No. 4 seed Illini face Buckeyes in Big Ten Tournament opener

## Manson looks to regain form after rough outing

BY STEVE CONTORNO  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Starting pitcher Kevin Manson will need to rebound from Friday's performance quickly to keep Illinois on the winner's side of the Big Ten Tournament bracket. The sophomore lasted just two innings in his last outing, allowing six earned runs in a 14-4 loss to Purdue.

But for Manson, remembering his last win will be more important than forgetting last weekend's loss.

The Illini will face Ohio State in the first round of the conference tournament in Ann Arbor, Mich., Wednesday, a team that took two of three games

from Illinois in a rain-shortened series May 9-11. It was Manson who was able to pick up the lone win, and in a tournament where two losses will send a team home, picking up a first-round win is critical to a team's success.

"I'm just looking to repeat the same thing that I did against them a few weekends ago," Manson said. "It's important to get into the winner's bracket. It's better than being in the loser's bracket obviously. It spaces out the games a lot better."

The Illini could play anywhere from four to seven games based on their early performance. Winning means moving on to face either No. 1 Michigan or No. 2 Purdue in the second round Thursday while losing sends Illinois to a win-or-go home bracket where the team will have to win four games in a row just to get back into the title game.

Entering the last weekend of play, Illinois had a chance to take the No. 2 seed from Purdue by sweeping the Boilermakers and would have guaranteed itself a first-round bye. But instead, the Illini dropped three of four against Purdue and fell to fourth in the conference, setting them up for a date with Ohio State in the first round Wednesday.

The Illini, however, seemed positive about their seeding, with recent history favoring the underdog. The Buckeyes took home the



AARON FACEMIRE THE DAILY ILLINI

Kevin Manson pitches against Purdue during the first game of a series last Friday. The sophomore allowed six earned runs in a 14-4 loss and the Illini dropped the series 3-1. Illinois will face Ohio State in the first round of the Big Ten Tournament.

conference title last year despite finishing the conference season in sixth place.

"Obviously, you'd like to be the highest seed possible to be a one or two seed and get that bye, but three through six seed I don't think it matters; I don't think there's any advantage," head coach Dan Hartleb said.

"When you go into the tournament setting everything is reset to 0-0. I think our players understand that we can beat and have beaten each and every team in the tournament. We didn't beat Michigan this year, but we beat them twice last year and played very well at Michigan."

Senior outfielder and designated hitter Daniel Webb was able to find a positive to the team's drop in the standings.

"We're still a home team first game, and we avoided a tough matchup with Indiana because they got one of the best pitchers in the conference," Webb said, referring to Matt Bashore of the Hoosiers.

After Manson, Hartleb said he still will have to discuss with his staff where the rest of his pitchers fall into the rotation. Freshman Phil Haig's most recent outing could lead to him pitching in game two, maybe more so if Illinois plays Purdue, a team Haig dominated Saturday in a 2-0 win. The southpaw's performance garnered Big Ten Co-Pitcher of the

## Haig receives conference honors for performance



HAIG

Starting pitcher Phil Haig thought someone was playing a joke on him when he first heard he was the Big Ten Co-Pitcher of the Week. After all, Illinois hasn't been given the honor all season, and Haig, just a freshman was the starter for a team that lost three of four games during the weekend.

But Monday morning the conference announced Haig was to share the honor with Northwestern's Eric Jokisch, another freshman, who leads the Big Ten in conference wins with seven. Both Haig and Jokisch pitched shutouts for their respective teams, with Haig shutting down second-place Purdue and Jokisch dominating Big Ten champion Michigan.

"He was outstanding and it's well deserving," head coach Dan Hartleb said of Haig's award. "We were in a tough situation where we were slumping a little bit. We needed somebody to step up and have a good game for us, and he was awesome that game."

Haig threw a two-hit complete game Saturday, striking out three, and faced just 25 hitters in a seven-inning game. In four innings the minimum number of batters came to the plate, and he never pitched to more than four hitters in an inning. Haig also picked up the win as Illinois topped Purdue 2-0, the team's only victory of the weekend.

## Week honors.

"We'll have discussions about past games, matchups, those types of things," Hartleb said. "I'm kind of wide open. I got some opinions, but that's why you have a staff, all those things go into it."

There will be pressure on Illinois' lineup, as well, to support a pitching staff that has posted a 7.50 ERA in Big Ten play. For a team without much power — just 29 home runs compared to Michigan's conference-leading 70 — Illinois relies on stringing hits together

to score runs. The team wasn't able to do that consistently against Ohio State or Purdue the past two weekends, but with a Big Ten high .416 on-base percentage, Hartleb knows the hits will come.

"Our guys understand every day is a new day and they all understand they're good hitters," Hartleb said. "They all understand what it takes for us to win: move base runners and get key hits and put the ball in play in RBI situations. We're not approaching anything different."