

## 10 Greatest Underdog Wins in Eaton Baseball Postseason History



Eaton Fightin' Reds (19-1)  
Renfroe (11-0)

Greatest Underdog Win in History  
**1985 Regional Championship**  
At Old Eaton Baseball Field  
**June 21, 1985**



Lamar Savages (18-1)  
Brocail (8-0)

### Background

Lamar's Doug Brocail enters the game undefeated throughout his entire career as arguably the top pitcher in the state at any level with multiple pro scouts at each of his games (*he would go on to pitch in the Major Leagues for 18 years*), and Lamar is the favorite to go on to win the Class 2A State Championship riding an 18-game win streak.

The Reds though enter the game with undefeated ace lefthander Scott Renfroe, and by winning a coin flip, get to host this Regional Championship.

### Game Summary

Brocail was on pace to throw his 3<sup>rd</sup> no-hitter of his career entering the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, having struck out 14 Reds in 6 innings with a near 90mph fastball.

The Reds had scored a third-inning run when Scott Renfroe hit a long flyball into right field that was dropped as the Lamar outfielder had to step onto Eaton's running track while trying to make the play, leading to Brad Grauberger advancing to 3<sup>rd</sup> base and then scoring on a passed ball. Lamar tied the game in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning with a two-out single, but that is all that Renfroe had allowed as he then retired Lamar in order in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> innings.

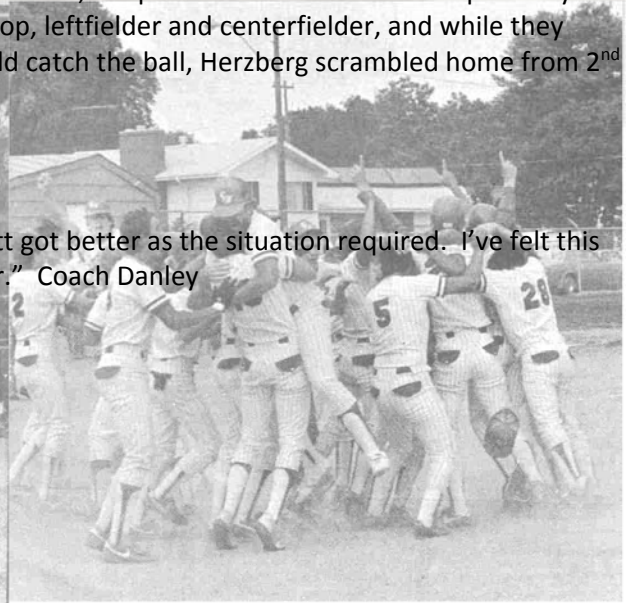
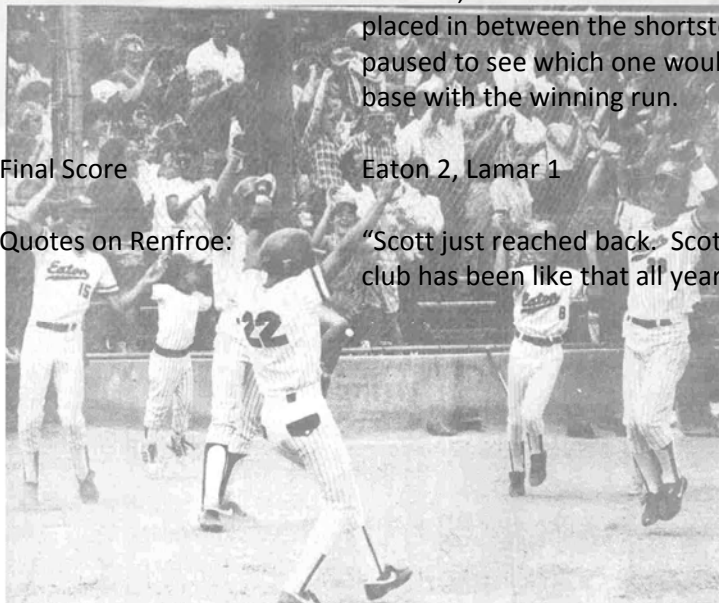
Then the Reds used pinch hitter Dan Gilbert with one out in the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, and he lined a 2-2 pitch back up the middle for the Reds' first hit of the day. Mike Herzberg then re-entered to run at 1<sup>st</sup> base, and with two outs advanced to 2<sup>nd</sup> base on a single from Brad Grauberger. With the winning run on 2<sup>nd</sup> base, Scott Renfroe hit a two-out, 1-0 pitch into leftfield that was perfectly placed in between the shortstop, leftfielder and centerfielder, and while they paused to see which one would catch the ball, Herzberg scrambled home from 2<sup>nd</sup> base with the winning run.

### Final Score

Eaton 2, Lamar 1

### Quotes on Renfroe:

"Scott just reached back. Scott got better as the situation required. I've felt this club has been like that all year." Coach Danley





Eaton Fightin' Reds (17-2)  
Stencel (9-1)

2<sup>nd</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History  
1981 Regional Championship  
At Englewood High School  
May 19, 1981

vs.

Starting Pitchers



Holy Family Tigers  
Holland (12-1)

Background

The Reds were in the State Tournament for just the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, after only qualifying for State twice in the 1970's. The Reds had lost in the first round in the 1980 State Tournament to end the season, and came into the 1981 Regional Tournament as a huge underdog. Steve Stencel had just thrown the game of his life the previous weekend to strike out 15 batters from Burlington in the Reds' first-ever postseason no-hitter—he would need to repeat that kind of effort today to keep the Reds in this game.

Holy Family's Don Holland was arguably the top pitcher in the State of Colorado at all levels in 1981, with a fastball that touched 90mph and he was followed by Major League Baseball scouts every time he was handed the ball. On this day, the New York Yankees and Kansas City Royals attended Englewood High School to watch Don Holland pitch against the Reds. Other MLB teams' scouts were awaiting the following weekend when Holland would be pitching in Colorado Springs in the Final Four, considering it a near certainty that he would win on this day.

Both Stencel for the Reds and Holland for Holy Family were the best overall players on their teams as well, batting #3 in their respective lineups.

Game Summary

The Reds applied pressure early on, loading the bases in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning, and putting runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base with no outs in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning, but didn't score in either opportunity as Holland got out of these jams en route to striking out 15 batters throughout the game. However, Stencel held the game scoreless allowing just one hit through the first 4 innings, and getting out of a bases-loaded jam in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning with an infield fly and a strikeout.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> inning, Mike Anderson singled, stole second base and advanced to third base on a wild pitch. Mark Anderson then drew a walk, and then stole second base to have runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base with two outs. Bill Lawhead then hit a grounder squarely up the middle that the Holy Family shortstop made a great play on to snag, but Lawhead outraced the throw to first base for an infield hit, and both Andersons raced home on the play, with Mark scoring from 2<sup>nd</sup> base after rounding 3<sup>rd</sup> base hard and seeing the first baseman hold the ball momentarily trying to steal a call at 1<sup>st</sup> base on the infield hit.

With a 2-0 lead, Stencel then was nearly perfect, striking out the side on just 10 pitches in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning, and picking up a strikeout and a soft grounder himself to end the 6<sup>th</sup> inning. The Reds added another insurance run in the top of the 7<sup>th</sup> inning with Mike Anderson stealing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base before Bill Kurtz drove him in. Stencel then made a great diving tag on a bunt down the line, and then with two outs and the tying runs on base and Holy Family's #2 hitter at bat, Bill Lawhead jumped to make a great catch in rightfield to end the game.

Final Score

Eaton 3, Holy Family 1

Quotes on Stencel:

"You've got to admire his competitive instincts. He gave a gutsy performance. And the defense played well behind him." Coach Danley

"The little guy (Stencel) kept them off balance with a good curve and good control." MLB scout Carl Blando, who was there to scout the opposing pitcher





Eaton Fightin' Reds (34-11)  
Carrasco

3<sup>rd</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History  
1997 Legion B State Championship  
At Fort Morgan Legion Field  
August 4, 1997



Greeley Central Wildcats (34-11)  
Dummett

Background

Back in the mid 1990's, Eaton was still considered the small school and huge underdog back when Greeley Central was often one of the top Class 5A teams in the state. The Reds hadn't won a summer State Championship in 36 years.

The previous weekend in the District Tournament, Nolan Mininger held down Greeley Central in relief as the Reds came back to win, but no District Championship Game was played due to rain. In the State Tournament, Greeley Central beat the Reds 11-8 to send Eaton to the loser's bracket, which the Reds came back through with a 6-5 win over Arapahoe and then a 17-9 win over Greeley Central led by strong relief from Alex Ochoa to force this final game of the tournament.

The 17-9 win the day before allows the Reds to pitch All-State third baseman, Mike Carrasco, in the final game, Greeley Central starts with Nate Dummett and will turn to George Talamantes in relief.

Game Summary

The Reds took a 1-0 lead in the 1<sup>st</sup> inning as Jeff Meyers doubled and Mike Carrasco singled. Then after Greeley Central tied it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning, Josh Yarber singled, Casey Wiederspan singled, and Jason Smith singled to give the Reds a 2-1 lead. Carrasco then retired the side in order in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning, and Zack Hughes hit a solo home run to increase the lead to 3-1. Carrasco then held Greeley Central scoreless again in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> innings, before Meyers hit another double and Carrasco drove in another RBI to give the Reds a 4-1 lead. In the 6<sup>th</sup> inning, Greeley Central scored an unearned run before Carrasco induced an inning-ending pop out to Meyers. In the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, still ahead 4-2, Carrasco didn't allow a single batter to reach base, first with an infield popout, then a strikeout and then a groundout to send the Reds to the State Title pileup.

Final Score

Eaton 4, Greeley Central 2

Quotes:

"I never really got tired because I had my adrenaline going. I think I enjoy beating Greeley Central more than I do winning the State Title." Mike Carrasco

"Hey, anytime you play Eaton, you're in for a dogfight." Greeley Central Coach Brian Holmes

"We battled back (through the loser's bracket) and received some strong pitching. Carrasco is just a warrior." Coach Danley



Eaton Fightin' Reds (21-3)  
Griffith (5-0)

#### Background

4<sup>th</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History  
2002 State Championship  
At All-City Stadium in Denver  
May 18, 2002



Denver Christian Crusaders (23-0)  
Draayer

vs.  
Starting Pitchers

Undefeated Denver Christian, with 12 seniors—5 of them hitting over .400—enters the game as not only the clear favorite, but as one of the best teams Class 3A baseball has seen over the last few years, arguably with a better offense than even recent State Champions including Eaton, Lamar, and La Junta. They have saved back their ace pitcher for the State Championship Game, getting through the semifinals without needing to use their ace Andy Draayer; Draayer beat the Reds in a non-league game earlier in the year.

Unlike the Crusaders who have rolled into the State Championship Game, the Reds graduated a number of key starters a year ago, and more or less snuck into this State Championship, with a 1-0 win over Middle Park, an 11-6 win over University, and a 7-3 win over Lutheran. Some in the press even stated that Denver Christian is more talented than Eaton at every single position, and they're not necessarily altogether wrong.

Reds' starter Lee Griffith has been working on his knuckle curveball for years, two weeks before this game he finally got it down, and that pitch from Griffith would be decisive.

#### Game Summary

Griffith got out of the first inning with a great double play turned by shortstop Branden Trujillo. Griffith then struck out the side in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning, before the Reds took a 1-0 lead as Tyler Garretson knocked in an RBI single. Griffith then recorded another strikeout and two infield outs to end the top of the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning. Griffith had thrown only 3 fastballs through 3 innings, relying on his knuckle curveball and allowing just two hits, one walk, and one hit batter thus far.

Then the Reds opened up the game with a remarkable 8-run 3<sup>rd</sup> inning led by a double from Eric Kelly, sacrifice flies by Dylan Ramer and Josh Noblitt, and then with two outs and a relief pitcher in the game for Denver Christian, Eric Kelly hit a monster 3-run home run.

Griffith then shut down Denver Christian in the top of the 4<sup>th</sup> inning with two more strikeouts, before the Reds added 4 more runs mainly through bases-loaded walks to achieve a 12-0 lead. Griffith then took the mound and recorded two more strikeouts and induced a flyout to end the game after pitching the game of his life in his final game.

#### Final Score

Eaton 12, Denver Christian 0

#### Quotes:

"Not in my wildest imagination. Not even close. I figured we'd have to score a run or two and hope to steal the game. If we play them 10 times, you'd think maybe we win 2 or 3." Coach Danley

"When we were ahead 9-0, I said to myself, 'that's a lot of runs to have to make up,' and that's when I figured we'd win, but I felt the intensity get even greater."  
Lee Griffith





Eaton Fightin' Reds (14-0)  
Renfroe (5-0)

#### Background

5<sup>th</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History  
**1983 District Championship**  
At Butch Butler Field in Greeley  
**April 30, 1983**



Valley Vikings (14-1)  
Aragon

vs.  
Starting Pitchers

In a different era, Valley comes into the game having won 25 of the last 27 spring head-to-head games against Eaton dating back to 1964, and both Eaton wins were non-league contests. *(Since 1998, Eaton has won 22 of the last 24 spring games by an average score of 12-4, and Eaton has won 20 straight head-to-head summer games since 2000).*

Valley has aces Lonnie Aragon (0.34 ERA) and Barry Joseph (0.59 ERA) rested for the game against Eaton. The winner of this District Championship Game would advance as the league's #1 seed to the State Tournament, the loser would have to face the winner of Fort Lupton and University with that winner then earning the league's 2<sup>nd</sup> and final seed.

#### Game Summary

The Reds allowed two unearned runs in the bottom of the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, but then came back to score 4 runs in the top of the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning as Pat McKay, Doug Leafgren, Brad Grauberger and Mike Rosales scored. Valley tied the game 4-4 in the bottom of the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning with a couple of hits and a sacrifice fly. The Reds then scored twice more as Pat McKay and Paul Cordova scored on consecutive full-count, two-out walks by Rosales, David Lawhead, and Mike Anderson after Valley changed pitchers.

With a 6-3 lead, Renfroe then dominated on the mound, facing just one batter over the minimum in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> innings, and then retiring the side in order in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> innings. After a leadoff double turned the lineup over for Valley in the top of the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, Mike Anderson entered in relief and got a flyout and a strikeout. Then with two outs and the bases loaded, holding onto just a 1-run lead, Anderson struck out the next batter on 3 pitches for the improbable win over Valley and District Championship.

#### Final Score

Eaton 6, Valley 5

*Note: Little could it have been known at the time, but a changing of the guard in Northern Colorado occurred soon after this season, as Valley would go on to play in the State Championship Game the following year as well, losing 19-3 to Sheridan, and then not again over the next 30+ years, while the Reds would go on to play in 19 of 23 State Championship Games, winning 11 of them, from 1993 through 2015.*





Eaton Fightin' Reds (16-2)  
Stencel (8-1)

Background

6<sup>th</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History  
1981 Regional Semifinals  
At Old Eaton Baseball Field  
May 9, 1981

vs.  
Starting Pitchers



Burlington Cougars  
Weisshaar

Burlington comes into the game having beaten the Reds in the Regional Semifinals in both 1979 and 1980, with Eaton facing highly-ranked Burlington for the 3<sup>rd</sup> straight season.

The previous year at Burlington, Reds' ace Steve Stencel was nearly perfect, allowing just 4 hits and 2 unearned runs in a 2-0 loss, on this day, he would need to be even better.

Game Summary

In the top of the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, Steve Stencel worked out of having two runners on base by striking out the final two batters of the inning to keep the game scoreless. Then in the bottom of the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, the Reds' first 3 batters, Joe Intermill, Mike Anderson, and Steve Stencel all singled and scored after Mark Anderson reached base and Bill Kurtz singled to give the Reds a 3-0 lead. The Reds would also score in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning off a solo home run by Kurtz, and then two more runs in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning after Kurtz singled, Bill Lawhead reached base, and Dudley Brown doubled.

None of that offense would matter though, as 15 minutes into the game, Stencel already supplied the only RBI on offense that the Reds would need given Stencel's dominant pitching performance. Stencel retired the side in order in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning, then again in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning, as well as in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning. In the 5<sup>th</sup> inning he walked two batters, but then struck out the next batter on just 3 pitches to end the inning.

With a no-hitter on the line, and facing the #2 batter in the lineup to start the 6<sup>th</sup> inning, Stencel completed what is still to this day one of the Reds' top 5 late-inning performances in history, striking out the final 6 batters of the game, never allowing more than one ball to any batter. Stencel retired the final 10 outs of the game via strikeout, in a performance that was not only the best ever up to that point in postseason history, but still stands now as one of the ultimate gritty complete-game performances in Eaton history, and one of only 3 postseason no-hitters thrown by Eaton in a must-win spring postseason game.

Final Score

Eaton 6, Burlington 0





Eaton Fightin' Reds (10-6)  
Collins (5-3)

7<sup>th</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History  
1976 League Championship Tiebreaker Game  
At Butch Butler Field in Greeley  
April 29, 1976



Highland Huskies  
Piller

#### Background

In a very different era, Highland comes into this one-game league championship playoff (*to determine seeding for the District Tournament as Eaton and Highland had split earlier in the year*) with Highland being the clear favorite not to just win this game, but to win the State Championship. Highland enters the game having defeated Eaton in 10 of the last 15 spring games, and 13 of the last 18 summer games.

As league co-champions, the Reds have already qualified for the postseason for the first time in 13 years, but in today's game the Reds are going for their 1<sup>st</sup> league championship in 13 years and 3<sup>rd</sup> all-time, and to earn the #1 seed for the upcoming District Tournament. The Reds started the season 0-4, but then rattled off enough league wins to tie Highland for the league championship, forcing this game today.

#### Game Summary

While the Reds did enough on offense with 3 runs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning, led by a 2-run double by Craig Collins, and another 3 runs in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning led by a 2-run double from Kirk Kindsfater, the story of this game was Craig Collins' remarkable pitching performance.

Collins retired the first 16 batters in order, carrying a perfect game into the 6<sup>th</sup> inning until a pinch hitter broke it up with a single. Collins then recorded 5 straight outs to end the game facing just one batter over the minimum and nearly posting a perfect game, in a situation in which the Reds were heavy underdogs to even win the game, let alone to dominate the way that Collins did. Collins had 8 strikeouts, including 3 of the last 4 batters of the game, and needed only 70 pitches to complete the improbable victory.

#### Final Score

Eaton 6, Highland 0



Eaton Fightin' Reds (13-8)  
*Comer (3-2)*

## 8<sup>th</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History

1991 State Semifinals

At Runyon Field in Pueblo

May 30, 1991



Manitou Springs Mustangs (16-2)  
*Ponce (11-0)*

vs.

*Starting Pitchers*

### Background

The Reds are going up against one of the top pitchers in the state, as Manitou Springs' Robbie Ponce has an 11-0 record and has only allowed 5 walks all season. The 1991 Reds have posted the worst Eaton record (at 13-8) in a dozen years and became the first Reds' team to fail to win the League Championship in a dozen years, but the seniors on this team have already beaten the odds and advanced the Reds to the Final Four.

In a State Tournament first, Ponce is arrested before the game by police in Pueblo, and is bailed out of jail just in time to arrive 5 minutes before the start of the game and takes the mound without warming up.

### Game Summary

The Reds' first 3 batters, Collin Moody, Jeff Sutter, and Todd Hernandez all drew walks before Josh Schneider singled to give the Reds an early 2-0 lead. The Reds also started off the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning with a couple of walks, and then Sutter singled in two more runs to give the Reds a 4-0 lead. Manitou Springs took a 5-4 lead after a couple of Eaton errors in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning, but the Reds came back in the bottom of the 6<sup>th</sup> inning as Moody walked, stole 2<sup>nd</sup> base, and then stole home after Todd Hernandez walked and stole 2<sup>nd</sup> base on the double steal. Schneider then hit a booming triple to give the Reds the lead and later scored on a throwing error to give the Reds a 7-5 lead going into the 7<sup>th</sup> inning. Jake Comer had kept Manitou scoreless in every inning except the 4<sup>th</sup>, but gave way to Jeff Sutter to close out the game in the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, which he did with a flyout, strikeout, and then after a hit and error brought the tying run to the plate, a single was hit to Reds' leftfielder Brad Schmeh who threw the runner out going home to end the game.

### Final Score

Eaton 7, Manitou Springs 5





Eaton Fightin' Reds (16-1)  
*Renfroe (6-0)*

## 9<sup>th</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History

1983 State Semifinals

At Runyon Field in Pueblo

May 21, 1983

vs.

Starting Pitchers



Trinidad Miners  
*Santistevan*

### Background

The Reds enter the game on a remarkable streak of victories, having defeated Valley for the first time ever in the District Championship and then defeated Florence 1-0 at home in the Regional Championship. The previous year in 1982, the Reds didn't even make it to the State Tournament (*the Reds have gone on to qualify in every year since*), so they enter the 1983 State Tournament as major underdogs.

Trinidad though is still the heavy favorite to advance past Eaton to reach the State Championship Game, pitching their ace against Reds' sophomore Scott Renfroe.

### Game Summary

In a seesaw battle, the Reds got down 3-0 early, then took a 4-3 lead in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning with a key 2-RBI double from Mike Anderson, but then fell behind 7-4 going into the 5<sup>th</sup> inning. The Reds narrowed the deficit to 7-6 with RBI hits from Mike McKay and Pat McKay, but then fell behind 8-6 going into the 6<sup>th</sup> inning. The Reds then put up 6 straight batters that all reached base and came around to score led by a 2-RBI single from Scott Renfroe to take a 12-8 lead. Reliever Paul Cordova then got the Reds out of the 6<sup>th</sup> inning allowing just one run and stranding two runners on base to maintain a 12-9 lead going into the final inning. After a leadoff single, Mike Anderson took the mound and after allowing a single, fielded the next ball for an out and then recorded a strikeout on a key 3-2 pitch to the #9 hitter from Trinidad. As their lineup turned over to the leadoff batter representing the tying run, Anderson picked off the trail runner at 1<sup>st</sup> base and Mike McKay applied the tag to end the game and finish off one of the Reds' most wild back-and-forth State Tournament games in history.

### Final Score

Eaton 12, Trinidad 9



Eaton Fightin' Reds (12-7)  
Collins (6-4)

Background

10<sup>th</sup> Greatest Underdog Win in History  
1976 Regional Championship  
At Old Eaton Baseball Field  
May 8, 1976

vs.

Starting Pitchers



Lutheran Lights (14-5)  
Pete Gaide (5-1)

Lutheran enters the game with the most-talked about battery in Colorado baseball, the Gaide twins, pitcher Pete and catcher Paul, both hitting over .440. The team is loaded with seniors that reached the State semifinals the year before in 1975. Lutheran's team batting average is .330, Eaton's team batting average is an astounding .180, far below any other team in the State Tournament.

The Reds started the season without any realistic opportunity to be in the playoffs, as not only had the Reds not gotten a taste of postseason baseball in more than a dozen years, this year's squad then started the season with a 1-5 record. The Reds have only 3 senior starters, but one of them is ace pitcher Craig Collins, along with catcher/shortstop Kirk Kindsfater and pitcher/shortstop Brett Weber.

Game Summary

In this game, one team outthit the other 5-2, while getting the benefit of 7 errors while they only committed one error. Luckily for the Reds, those aren't the categories in the box score that matter.

After two Eaton errors led to an early 1-0 Lutheran lead, Collins stranded a runner in scoring position with a strikeout and groundout to end the top of the 1<sup>st</sup> inning. The Reds then tied the game in the bottom of the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, before two more errors by Eaton gave Lutheran another 1-run lead in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning, before Collins induced a bases-loaded infield popout to end the threat. Collins then retired the side in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning, before the Reds' first 4 batters reached base on walks and scored to take a 5-2 lead. The Reds' opponent was still throwing a no-hitter into the 4<sup>th</sup> inning until Kirk Kindsfater knocked in Bill Kurtz with a two-out single to give the Reds a 6-2 lead.

Collins was electric from there, striking out the side in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning, and then after a single and a full-count walk, retiring the #8 and #9 batters to end the 6<sup>th</sup> inning. After two more errors to start the 7<sup>th</sup> inning, Collins took things into his own hands and fielded the next groundball himself for an out and then struck out the next batter on 3 pitches before inducing a groundout to shortstop Brett Weber to complete the remarkable victory.

Final Score

Eaton 6, Lutheran 2

Quotes on Collins:

"When he got the lead, I think that fastball picked up about 15 miles per hour."  
Coach Danley

On whether he considered going to the bullpen..."Craig is able to reach down when he has to. When he smells that victory you want to leave him in there."  
Coach Danley