

# SPORTS

## Thomas returns with excellence; baseball starts 2-0

**By Mike Monahan**  
**BROADLANDS** – The return of Louisville recruit Tanner Thomas happened to be on the first game of the season as rain canceled the first several. Thomas was cleared to play on opening day, March 30. The game was at LeRoy instead of at Hoopeston as they had double booked games.

Thomas suffered a hamstring avulsion and tendon rupture (ruptured his hamstring tendon off the bone) in a football game on Sept. 30 at Niantic in a 28-12 win over Sangamon Valley.

Thomas returned to his strong pitching ways as he threw five innings and allowed four hits, two runs, one earned, with two walks and 11 strikeouts and offensively was perfect in two at-bats with a home run and two RBIs. Arcola beat last year's Class A fourth place team LeRoy, a team that has won 20 or more in the last seven seasons.

Monday at Don Stampini Field in Broadlands, Arcola freshman Jackson Griffith made his first hit of the young season count as it was a two-run homer in the first inning against Heritage in the Lincoln Prairie Conference opener. The Purple Riders scored in three of the four innings it batted, including six in the second for a 9-0 advantage. Arcola went on to record a 13-1 victory in a game called after four and a half innings due to the 10-run rule.

The game was originally scheduled to be played at Arcola, but the field is not ready yet. Therefore Arcola was the home team.

Arcola was to have traveled to Assumption to play Central A&M Wednesday.

Arcola is to play home against Martinsville at 10 a.m. Saturday in the first game on

the new field at Moore Memorial Park.

### Arcola 13, Heritage 1, 5 innings

Arcola led 1-0 when Griffith stepped to the plate with one out and Brevyn Whisman on second. With a count of 1-1 he smacked the ball over the fence in left field.

I saw the pitch out of his hand and it came down a little inside and a little high," said Griffith. "I turned on it a little bit and it went as far as I wanted to. It is my first hit on the high school team and so it means a lot."

The Purple Riders erupted with six runs in the second to take control over the 0-7, Hawks a young team.

The inning started with a double by Shonkwiler to left-center. It was one of seven doubles for Arcola on a day with temperatures in the 70s and strong wind blowing to left. A single by Gerardo Alanis put runners on the corner for Austin Kutz, who singled, scoring Shonkwiler. Brevyn Whisman doubled and Alanis scored as did Kutz on an error. Caiden Helmuth doubles in Whisman for a 7-0 lead. Helmuth scored on a line drive down the right field line for a double. Henson-Stice scored after going to third on wild pitch and reaching home on a single by Phillips for the 9-0 advantage.

Heritage, coached by Arcola graduate Jason Conn, scored its lone run in the fourth when Zaien Smith led off with a walk on a full-count pitch. With one out Joey Markstahler reached on an error and Smith advanced to third. Smith scored on a single by Julian Gray.

"We definitely hit the ball today," said Arcola coach Mike Phillips. "I thought we played well defensively."

Bradon Shonkwiler picked up the victory throwing 42 pitches, 29 for strikes and allowing two hits with no walks and six strikeouts.

"I thought Shonkwiler pitched well today, said Phillips.

"We are still getting the feel for things offensively wise and on the field just due to the fact we have not been able to be outside. We are still working out some bugs."

### Arcola 7, LeRoy 3

Arcola scored four runs in the second and never trailed.

The inning started with Jayden Henson-Stice being hit

by a pitch. Braden Phillips singled and with one out D. J. Stevens singled to load the bases for Austin Kutz who reached on a fielder's choice as Henson-Stice scored. Phillips went home via an error and Kutz moved to second before Thomas hit a two-run homer to center.

Thomas struck out eight of the first nine Panthers. Brody Bennett had the first hit for LeRoy to lead off the fourth for the team that lost seven players from last year's team due to graduation, including six pitchers. Bennett advanced on a single to left by Noah Company and advanced to third on a fielder's choice before scoring on a single by Tyson Brent.

"It was nice to get him on

the mound after a long off-season on recovery," said Phillips. "It was nice and he looked really good. He just got up there in pitch count. So Jayden Henson-Stice came in and shut things down. He did a good job on the mound."

Thomas threw 97 pitches, 59 for strikes.

On the mound last season Thomas had 99 strikeouts and 22 walks in eight appearances and an earned run average of 1.08 throwing 46 and a third innings. He was a unanimous first team all-LPC player.

Arcola led 5-3 before adding two insurance runs in the seventh, one on a single by Hemuth and the other on a two-out walk to Anthony Garza.

"That was a good win for us;

a good way to start the season," said Phillips.

Heritage	000	10-1-3-6
Arcola	360	4x-13-11-2

Winning pitcher: Braden Shonkwiler (1-0) 3 innings, 2 hits, 0 runs, 0 walks, 6 strikeouts. Relief: D.J. Stevens 2 innings, 1 hit, 1 run, 0 earned, 1 walk, 1 strikeout

ARCOLA: Tanner Thomas 1-for-3, run, double, RBI; Brevyn Whisman 2-for-4, 2 runs, 2 doubles, 2 RBIs; Caiden Helmuth 1-for-2, double, run, RBI; Jackson Griffith 1-for-3, 2 runs, home run, 2 RBIs; Jayden Henson-Stice 1-for-2, double, run, RBI; Braden Phillips 1-for-2, run, RBI; Shonkwiler 1-for-1, double, run; Gerardo Alanis 1-for-3, 2 runs; Austin Kutz 2-for-3, double, 2 runs, 2 RBIs

Arcola	040	010	2-7-8-3
LeRoy	000	111	0-3-4-1

Winning pitcher: Thomas (1-0) 5 innings, 4 hits, 2 runs, 1 earned, 11 strikeouts, 2 walks. Relief: Henson-Stice 2 innings, 0 hits 1 run, 0 earned, 3 strikeouts, 0 walks

ARCOLA: Thomas 2-for-2, 3 runs, double, home run, 2 RBIs; Whisman 2-for-4, double, run; Helmuth 1-for-4, 2 RBIs; Henson-Stice run; Phillips 1-for-3, run; Anthony Garza run; Stevens 2-for-3; Kutz run, RBI

## ARCOLA SPORTS SCHEDULE

(Through April 121)

High school boys and girls track.	Softball
<b>Saturday</b> Arcola at Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond Invite 10 a.m.	<b>Friday</b> Villa Grove at Arcola, 4:30 p.m.
<b>Tuesday</b> Sullivan at Arcola, 4 p.m.	<b>Saturday</b> Martinsville at Arcola, 10 a.m.
<b>Friday</b> Arcola at Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond, 4:30 p.m.	<b>Monday</b> Arcola at Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond, 4:30 p.m.
<b>Saturday</b> Martinsville at Arcola, 10 a.m.	<b>Tuesday</b> Arcola at Mattoon, 4:30 p.m.
<b>Monday</b> Arcola at Argenta-Oreana, 4:30 p.m.	Junior High boys and girls track
<b>Wednesday</b> Sullivan at Arcola, 4:30 p.m.	<b>Thursday</b> Tri-County, Bement at Arcola, 4 p.m.



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