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The Et Cetera

## O'Shea aims for return to NJCAA World Series

Sophomore shortstop **Hunter O'Shea** has been a big part of the Eastfield baseball team's recent success, hitting .296 with 13 home runs, 110 RBIs, 125 runs scored and 31 stolen bases in his career. He helped lead the Harvester Bees to the NJCAA World Series in 2022 and to the No. 1 ranking in the Division III national poll this season. O'Shea sat down with Et Cetera photo editor **Rory Moore** to discuss his relationship with the team and what baseball means to him.



PHOTOS BY RORY MOORE/THE ET CETERA

Hunter O'Shea has a batting average of .292 this season and has hit 13 home runs in his career.

**Q** What got you into baseball in the first place, and how important is it in your life?

**A** When I was younger, my sister played softball, so going to all her games motivated me to play baseball. I've been playing since I was like 4 or 5. And it's pretty big in my life. I've been playing ever since then.

**Q** What was it like to play in the NJCAA World Series, and has that experience helped motivate you for this year?

**A** Oh, yeah. It has definitely motivated me. It was a different feeling. It was different than any other game I've ever played. It was a crazy atmosphere. It was just all around a great experience.

**Q** What are your expectations for this year's team after making it to the World Series last year?

**A** Go back and do it again. But this time, win.

**Q** What's the biggest highlight in your baseball career so far?

**A** That's a tough one. Probably just going to the World Series honestly. It's perhaps the biggest stage I've ever played on.

**Q** Have you had to overcome any challenges in your journey so far?

**A** Oh, yeah. When I was a sopho-



O'Shea, right, holds the 2022 district championship trophy won by Eastfield.

more in high school, I was at a 6A high school. We were a pretty big name. I didn't play much. My hitting wasn't there, so it really took a lot mentally for me to just be able to overcome that and start doing what I needed to do and challenge myself more than ever.

**Q** Is there a walk-up song that you have during the games?

**A** Yeah, it's "25k Jacket" by Lil Baby.

**Q** Do you have a pro player that

you admire most and why?

**A** I'd have to say Jose Altuve because, as short as he is, he made it happen with a lot of hard work and dedication. And he's one of the best second basemen to play in the major leagues right now.

**Q** What would you say are the team's biggest strengths, and what do you think it will take to reach your goals in the future?

**A** Our pitching this year is very

good. The pitchers fill it up and throw a lot of strikes. We can be great. We're just not hitting like we should right now, but there's a lot of good stuff on the offensive side. Everything's just got to click. Pitchers get those strikes. Hitters got to hit. Defensively, we're solid.

**Q** How would you describe your relationship with the coaching staff?

**A** Oh, great. I love them; they love me. They're like my second family. You know, we're all pretty close. We laugh, have fun, but when it's time to work, it's time to work.

**Q** What are your interests outside of baseball and school?

**A** I like to fish, hang out with friends, the usual. I'm a big video game guy. I've got a built PC at home, so I spend a lot of the time there.

**Q** What video games do you like to play?

**A** "Call of Duty," "Rocket League" and "Rainbow Six Siege."

**Q** What are your plans after Eastfield?

**A** I'm not quite sure honestly. Either go play (baseball) or call it quits and go work and start a life.

# Eastfield loses in district semifinal

By **ANTHONY ROSADO**

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The Eastfield Harvester Bees missed their opportunity to secure an automatic bid to the national tournament, losing 96-92 to Richland on Friday in the semifinals of the South Central District Tournament at North Lake.

"I'm totally upset about it," Eastfield coach Dexter Young said. "There's nothing more I wanted than to win a tournament and make it to nationals."

However, even with the loss, Young is hopeful that Eastfield will receive an at-large bid. The tournament field will be announced at 1 p.m. Wednesday. North Lake went on to win the tournament, and the Blazers will try to defend their title in the national tournament.

The Harvester Bees were leading the semifinal game against Richland 50-35 at halftime and seemed to be in control. But it all went downhill in the second half when they lost that momentum and were outscored 61-42 by the Thunderducks.

"We got comfortable and stopped fighting and stopped putting pressure [on them]," Young said. "They came back fighting. We took the pressure off, and they put the pressure on."

This is the second time this season Eastfield

has lost a lead against Richland. On Feb. 8, the Harvester Bees led 60-52 at halftime and were outscored 57-45 in the second half.

Eastfield struggled to hit shots in the tournament. The team averaged 34.7% shooting from behind the three-point line this season but only shot 25% (6-for-24) against Richland. Their 92-point total was well below their season average of 109.7 points per game.

Forward Dwayne Reliford was the only Eastfield starter in double digits, posting a double-double with 22 points with 14 rebounds. Reserve guard Jacore Williams also had a double-double with 20 points and 10 rebounds. Tylan Harris added 14 points and Torian Harris had 11.

Young said his team learned a lot during his first season as head coach.

"There's going to be a lot of adversity," he said. "There's going to be a lot of ups and downs. But basically, like in a game, every team has runs, and you have to be willing to fight. It's just learning. The game is more mental than physical, and we have to get stronger mentally."

Young has his eyes set on the future and is already recruiting the next group of Harvester Bees.

"We're going to dominate, and I'm saying that to everybody. They know," he said. "The guys I bring in are just tough."



PHOTOS BY RORY MOORE/THE ET CETERA

Clockwise from top, Amari Williams attempts a layup in the Harvester Bees' first-round victory over Cedar Valley on Feb. 28; Torian Harris drives to the basket; and Jacore Williams dribbles the ball past Richland's Desmond Cobbs.

