

# Tigers defeat rival Redbirds in wrestling triangular

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** – **Edwardsville's wrestling team** took another step to the Southwestern Conference championship Thursday night by defeating Alton as part of a triangular meet Thursday night at Jon Davis Wrestling Center.

The Tigers used three pins and got decisions in several other bouts to defeat the Redbirds 44-21; Edwardsville also downed Belleville Althoff 57-11, while the Redbirds got past the Crusaders 42-36.

“This is what all the coaches go through,” said Edwardsville coach Jon Wagner. “We've got some kids out, we want to win the Southwestern Conference, but you want your kids ready for regionals...you try to win the Southwestern Conference while you're getting ready for February, but this is a big step. You've still got Belleville East and East St. Louis left, and this is a big step to winning it outright.”

“Clearly, they're (Edwardsville) an outstanding team,” said **Redbird coach Eric Roberson**. “They've shown that in the conference results so far, but we battled in some matches, came out ahead in a few. I knew that match of the night would be at 182 (the Tigers' James Watters against the Redbirds' KeOntay Holmes); I thought we would have liked to get that one, but Watters is one of their better kids.

“We're going to work on some conditioning before regionals and make sure we're ready to go. When you wrestle Edwardsville, you know you have to be ready.”

The Tigers' Noah Surtin opened the contest against the Redbirds on a good note, scoring an 18-3 technical fall over Garrett Sims at 106, but Nijel Ward brought the Redbirds back with an 8-1 win over Dylan Wright at 113. Jaleen Yancey won on a forfeit at 120 and Ben Schlueter scored a 4-0 win over Courtney Wilson at 126 to put the Tigers ahead through four bouts.

The Redbirds' Connor Broyles then scored a 3:10 pin of Deonte Yancey at 132 to pull Alton closer, while the Tigers' Rafael Roman held off Jaelyn Watkins 3-2 at 138. Alton's Alejandro Lopez then scored a 23-8 technical fall over Baylor Montgomery at 145 to end the first half of the meet.

The second half began when Chase Viehman was awarded a forfeit at 152 and Gabe Jackson pinned Nolan Wosczyński in 3:06 at 160. Conner Mikulait took the 170 bout by forfeit, leading up to the feature bout between Holmes and Watters at 182.

Holmes went out and took an early lead over Watters, but Watters managed to get an escape and a take down to pull to 5-4. Watters then took over and scored an 11-6 win. Keyondrick Russell got some points back for the Redbirds when he defeated Riley Scheffel 13-4 at 195 and Alecquan Russell scored a 2-1 win over Cole Mikulait at 220, but Bobby Burnside pinned Ryan Kane in 3:49 to end the match in the Tigers' favor.

Against the Crusaders, the Redbirds' Keyondrick Russell, Kane, Wilson and Broyles all won their bouts by pin, the fastest one being a 21-second dispatching of Jake Shields by Keyondrick Russell at 195. For the Tigers against Althoff, Franky Romano, Jackson, Watters and Michael Weber all took pins, with Watters' 23-second pin over Shields being the quickest of the meet.

The Redbirds will be heading to Batavia for the Batavia Invitational Tournament Saturday, while the Tigers head to St. Charles West for the St. Charles West Tournament Friday and Saturday.

