

# Hard-working Coach Waldo and company head to sectional semifinals tonight

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** - As coaches come, there is one consensus that comes from coaches and players alike about **Edwardsville head basketball coach Mike Waldo** – he’s a winner.

By playoff time, **Edwardsville** has had time to refine skills all year long, and as usual, the Tigers are on top of their game.

Around the Southwestern Conference and Metro East area, when teams face Edwardsville, they know the team is always going to be prepared. Edwardsville, 25-4, meets Alton, 15-10, at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at Collinsville High School in the IHSA Class 4A Sectional Semifinals.

**Alton High School coach Eric Smith** said every coach in the Southwestern Conference will tell another that Waldo is “the hardest working coaching around.”

“The guy has had a lot of success for a reason,” he said. “He is very good at what he does. The most impressive thing is he gets kids to buy into playing a certain way and they do it very well.”

Waldo has posted a 598-203 record as head coach of the Tigers in 28 seasons. With a victory over Alton and then a win in the sectional championship game, he would hit the 600-win mark with the Tigers. East Moline carries a 22-6 mark against 19-8 Rock Island in the other sectional semifinal match on Tuesday at Normal West and the two winners will meet at 7 p.m. Friday for the championship.



**A.J. Epenesa**, a 6-foot-5 junior, leads The Tigers under the basket, averaging 16.7 points per game. **Junior Oliver Stephen and Mark Smith** are each averaging over 14 points a game for the team.

Epenesa has been a commanding force under the basket and that should be apparent on Tuesday against Alton.

“A.J. is a good player and a really good teammate,” Waldo said. “He does a really good job of making the right play offensively and defensively with rebounding and making it hard for other teams to score around the basket.”

**Mark Smith** does an exceptional job of directing the Tigers’ offense, Waldo said, and he expects solid things from him on Tuesday. Stephen’s shooting from the outside and Chrys Colley’s efforts on defense will also be important against the Redbirds.

**Maurice Edwards** had 24 points for Alton in the regional championship game against Quincy and the Tigers will have to contain him to capture a victory over the Redbirds.

Waldo has said in the past that when Edwardsville plays Alton, it will always be a competitive game because of the long-standing rivalry. Alton defeated a top-notch Quincy team 66-62 on Friday night to capture the Alton Regional. The Redbirds seem to be on top of their game as they enter the sectional.

Coach Waldo said there is no question the Southwestern Conference is very competitive and he added that his team has to keep preparing to play their best against Alton on Tuesday night.

“We to just keep improving every game we play,” Waldo said.