

Rodgers, Edwards' athleticism on display in Tigers-Warriors contest tonight

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Two of arguably the most exciting younger players in the Metro East – if not the entire St. Louis area – will be on the field at Tiger Stadium Friday night.

Sophomore **Edwardsville** running back **Dionte Rodgers** and freshman **Granite City** quarterback **Freddy Edwards** will meet up for the first time when the Warriors – with

their playoff hopes on the line – take on the Tigers in both teams' regular-season finale; kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

Granite enters the contest at 4-4 overall and 3-3 in the Southwestern Conference and needs a win and then get help from the IHSA football playoff points system (based on the number of opposition wins a team has) to have a shot at making the postseason; the Tigers, on the other hand are safely in the playoffs with a 7-1 overall record, 5-1 in the SWC, and will await who their first-round opponent will be when the playoff pairings are announced Saturday night.

“They're right on the bubble,” said **Tiger coach Matt Martin** about the Warriors. “They're going to be motivated.”

Edwards certainly has the attention of the Tigers going into this week's contest. “He's elusive and very athletic,” Martin said about Edwards. “He's got speed and if you make a mistake on him, it's six points.”

While the Tigers will be wanting to get as high a seed as possible, Martin wants his team to continue to improve. “That's been our goal all season, to get better every day and every week,” Martin said. “The kids have been doing all we've asked of them all season long and they've gotten better.

Rodgers himself has had a huge impact on Edwardsville's fortunes this season. “He's been a big part of our offense this season,” Martin said. “He'll get his opportunities.”

Rodgers has rushed for 1,105 yards this season on 137 carries, with a 72-yard carry early in the season being his longest; his 19 touchdowns on the season set a school single-season record set in 2012 by Sam Mulford. **Quarterback Brenden Dickmann** has carried for 303 yards on the year with three TDs and **Daval Torres** has 204 rushing yards on the year. Dickmann hasn't had to throw much this year, but is 49-for-90 passing for 720 yards and six touchdowns with six interceptions. Torres has been his favorite target with 18 receptions for 226 yards and a touchdown, with a longest catch of 56 yards.

Since taking the starting quarterback job after Kendrick Williba went down with an injury against Belleville East in Week 3, Edwards has rushed for 1,112 yards on 111 carries with 13 touchdowns and has thrown 28-for-56 for 330 yards with six touchdowns and three interceptions; Kendrick Williba has returned from injury and leads the Warriors with nine catches for 100 yards and two touchdowns; Kyle Thompson has eight receptions for 146 yards and a touchdown and Raheem Beckwith has seven catches for 29 yards .

If the game turns on anything, Martin feels, it will be on special teams. “We've got to play well on special teams,” Martin said. “We'll need to get pressure on defense and make sure we execute our assignments and move the ball on offense when we have it.”