

Tigers accomplish mission of winning regional title, move on to Chatham Glenwood Sectional

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ALTON – If **Edwardsville's volleyball team** was on a mission, one could label Thursday evening's **IHSAClass 4A Alton Regional final against Quincy** by two words: Mission Accomplished.

The Tigers won their first regional championship since 2014 and moved into next week's Chatham Glenwood Sectional by eliminating the Blue Devils 25-14, 25-16, to take their record to 30-6 on the season; Quincy was eliminated at 24-14 on the year.

The Tigers will take on O'Fallon, 20-25, 25-20, 25-20 winners over Belleville West Thursday evening in the O'Fallon Regional final, at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at Belleville West in a sectional semifinal match; the winner takes on Bloomington Regional-Rock Island Regional winner from Tuesday's other sectional semifinal at 6 p.m. Nov. 3 for the right to advance to the Nov. 5 Normal Community Supersectional; the state tournament will be held Nov. 11-12 at Redbird Arena on the Illinois State campus in Normal.

“The girls came out and played a great game from start to finish,” said **Tiger coach Jami Parker**. “Everything seemed to be clicking tonight; the serve receive was great, the girls were hitting well, were blocking well, they played defense. (Rachel) Verdun did a great job running the offense; it was a good night for the Tigers.”

Edwardsville got out of the gates rather quickly, getting out to a 5-1 lead in the opening game and running it to as much as 14-5 early on. “One of the things we talked about was coming out quick and then just being themselves and having fun with what they were doing and enjoying who they were doing it with,” Parker said. “They were loose, they were relaxed; they were enjoying what they were doing. That made the difference in the match.”

That the Tigers were determined to win their first regional in three years was an important thing for the team, felt **EHS' Rachel Pranger**. “It's a big deal for us; we came out strong; that helped us out,” Pranger said. “It's a big deal (to get to the sectional); it's most of the people on the team's first time (getting to a sectional tournament), so it's a big deal for us.

“We're excited; we're going to see what happens.”

“Edwardsville's a really good team,” said **Blue Devil coach Kelly Ricketts**. “We expected them to bring their 'A' game. This time of the year, every team has that mind-set. Edwardsville has some big attackers and they're going to get their kills, but there were times where we couldn't get a good block up; we just didn't play as well as we needed to.”

The Tigers scored seven of Game 1's first 10 points and expanded the lead to as much as 14-5 before Quincy made a small run to cut it to 14-9 before the Tigers expanded the lead to as much as 19-10 at one point. Thanks to steady hitting and attacking, Edwardsville scored six of the game's final seven points to run out winners.

Game 2 was similar to Game 1; EHS stormed out to an 11-3 lead, scoring seven of the first eight points of the game; Quincy made a run at Edwardsville, cutting the lead to 14-10 before the Tigers took control and getting to a 19-12 lead and quickly closing out the match and the Blue Devils.

Pranger had 13 kills for the Tigers, with Kate Martin and Verdun each contributing four kills; Shelby Saye and Martin each had two blocks, Verdun 20 assists, Verdun and Nicki Meyer seven digs each and Verdun three service aces.

“The girls had a checklist of things they wanted to accomplish this year,” Parker said. “A (Southwestern) conference championship was the first; they achieved the 30 wins they wanted tonight and they have a regional championship. Now we're heading to the sectionals next week and we'll be back in the gym working for it.”

Who the Tigers face doesn't matter to Parker. “It's the playoffs; every match is going to be tough,” Parker said. “They've got to come out and play hard every match and play clean every match. It doesn't matter who we face; the girls have to come out and do their job.”



