

Tigers host Oak River Forest to open IHSA Class 8A football playoff journey

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
October 28 2016 11:40 AM



[LIVE STREAM EDWARDSVILLE'S GAME LIVE ON EDGLENTODAY.COM](http://EDGLENTODAY.COM)

EDWARDSVILLE – That time of the year has arrived for 256 high school football teams throughout the state of Illinois.

The 43rd IHSA Football Championship.

For Edwardsville, their quest to reach the Class 8A final Nov. 26 at Memorial Stadium in Champaign-Urbana begins at 6 p.m. today at Tiger Stadium when the 12th-seeded Tigers host 21st-seeded Oak Park-River Forest of the West Suburban Silver conference of suburban Chicago.

“There's a lot of good teams in the playoffs,” said **Tiger coach Matt Martin**. “There's quite a bit of 8-1 teams who are in this year; it's going to be tough competition and it's going to be a difficult journey.”

The Huskies go into the game with a 7-2 record (4-2 in the West Suburban Silver) and feature senior **quarterback Jeremy Hunt**, who has rushed for 412 yards this year and thrown for 1,572 yards with 18 touchdowns. “He has some really tall options to throw the ball to,” Martin said of Hunt. “They like to stretch the field horizontally and balance the run and the pass and have a good offensive line and running backs; it's going to be a challenge to our defense.”

On defense, the Huskies feature **linebacker Rolliann Sturkey**, who leads the team in tackles and has had seven sacks and 17.5 tackles for losses this season. “They're really athletic, they like to load the box (on defense) and take away the run,” Martin said.

The Tigers counter with sophomore **running back Dione Rodgers**, who has run for 1,284 yards and a school single-season record 24 touchdowns this season with 1,413 all-purpose yards; **Brenden Dickmann** will run the Tiger offense, having run for 328 yards on the year and gone 49-for-92 passing with 720 yards and six touchdowns with seven interceptions. **Daval Torres** has been Dickmann's favorite target this season with 18 catches for 226 yards and a touchdown.

Nathan Kolesa is the Tigers' leading tackler on the season with 54 tackles, with Cyress Ahard right behind with 46 tackles; A.J. Epenesa leads EHS with 11 tackles for loss and has had two sacks on the year, along with Kolesa and Tate Rujawitz.

As always, success will depend on how well the Tigers execute their assignments. “Whoever executes the best usually ends up winning,” Martin said. “All we ask is that everyone gives their best effort physically and mentally.”