

Edwardsville-Bethalto battle to 4-4 draw in MVCHA matchup

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EAST ALTON – Bethalto's hockey team was close – very close – to scoring a big win Tuesday night.

Edwardsville's Sam Gibbons had other ideas.

Gibbons scored a shorthanded goal with the Tigers playing with an empty net with 2.1 seconds to go to give Edwardsville a 4-4 tie with the Eagles in a **Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association** game at **East Alton Ice Arena**. The draw put the Tigers at 1-0-1 on the year (three points) while the Eagles went to 2-0-1 (five points) on the year.

The Eagles got a hat trick from **Joe Watson** to nearly pull off the win. “He's one of the leaders on the team,” said **Eagle coach Derek Kahl**. “It's the first time that my seniors on the team have gotten a point against one of the Edwardsville varsity teams, so it's a good accomplishment for them, knowing they were that close to winning the game.

“I'm elated with how they played tonight, yes.”

“Edwardsville's always a good team,” Watson said. “We came in knowing it was going to be a tough game and we had the mentality that we had to grind it out. We definitely want to stay undefeated as long as we can; they're definitely one of the top two or three, maybe the No. 1 team in the league.

“It feels good to get a tie out of this one. Our offense is going quick, and that's good going into the games.”

“We knew they were a good team,” said **Tiger coach Jason Walker**. “I've seen the games they've played up to this point; we're learning, we've got a lot of young guys and there were some good things and some bad things.”

“The negative of the game was the start we got off to; we didn't have the first period that we wanted to. I thought we played a little bit slower; it's a learning experience for these guys. Hopefully we can build off that – the comeback at the end was big and showed a lot of character. It's something we can build off of.”

Watson started off the scoring for the Eagles when, with the Tigers' Kellin Roettgers off for roughing, Watson took a pass from Konnor Loewen and scored with 2:44 to go in the first period to put the Eagles up 1-0; Watson extended the lead to 2-0 on an unassisted goal just 38 seconds into the second period.

Edwardsville answered with a pair of goals from Collin Salter with 8:04 left in the period and from Mark Tucker with 3:25 left in the second to send the game into the second intermission tied at 2-2. It stayed that way until the 5:55 mark in the third period when Nolan Kahl scored to put the Eagles up 3-2.

Edwardsville countered again with a goal from William Schuster, assisted by Andrew LaRose, that tied the game up again at 3-3, but Watson seemingly won the game for the Eagles when he got a pass from Anthony Russo with 1:35 to go to put Bethalto ahead at 4-3. The Eagles had a chance to sew it up when Connor Hinterser was taken off for a trip with 36.5 seconds left and the Tigers playing with a sixth attacker, but the extra attacker despite playing shorthanded paid off thanks to Gibbons' goal right before the buzzer.

The Tigers play East Alton-Wood River at 7:15 p.m. Thursday at East Alton, while the Eagles meet up with Alton at 8:45 p.m. Monday at East Alton.

