

Glen Ellyn Glenbard West defeats Edwardsville 38-21 to end Tigers' season

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
November 12 2016 10:50 PM





EDWARDSVILLE – Glen Ellyn Glenbard West entered Saturday afternoon's **IHSA Class 8A quarterfinal** game against **Edwardsville** having won two of the last four Class 7A championships.

They showed why as the Hilltoppers eliminated the Tigers 38-21, holding Edwardsville to 108 rushing yards – including Dionte Rodgers 46 yards – and 341 yards of total offense to advance to next weekend's semifinal against defending Class 8A champion Wilmette Loyola Academy, 24-0 winners over Huntley in their quarterfinal matchup; Glenbard took their record to 10-2 on the year, while the Tigers bowed out with a 10-2 record in their first quarterfinal appearance since the 2013 Class 7A postseason.

“Their quarterback's (Cole Brady) pretty good,” said Tiger coach Matt Martin. “He's a good decision-maker, has an accurate, strong arm. They're pretty balanced; that's tough to defend.

“Maybe if you can get a lead and make them have to pass, you may be better off, but they were able to stay within the game and run their offense.”

Brady was 13-for-18 for 283 yards and two touchdowns, once each to Alec Pierce and Alex Pihlstrom.

“There is a lot of great football here; people don't talk about it in the Chicagoland area,” said Hilltopper coach Chad Hetlet, “but we're aware of the kind of football that comes out of here – great football tradition here in Edwardsville; we were concerned about how fast their defense would play.

“I won't say I was surprised how we moved the ball the way we did – we were doing that the last four or five weeks – but I was surprised about how much success we had against a good defense like that. Nothing but respect for them and their coaching staff and the season they had.”

The Hilltoppers took the opening kickoff and drove downfield quickly on the Tigers, Dre Thomas taking it in from 2 yards out to give West a 7-0 lead just 3:27 into the game. Edwardsville countered on their first possession, taking advantage of a fumbled punt to set up shop at the Hilltopper 19 and giving it to Rodgers, who scored from 8 yards on a counter to tie the game at 7-7.

Glenbard took the lead back thanks to a 27-yard field goal late in the opening term, but Edwardsville got their only lead of the day when Brenden Dickmann hit Dayleon Harris from 17 yards out with 9:42 left in the second term to get a 14-10 lead.

Opportunities did present themselves for the Tigers throughout the game, but EHS couldn't take advantage of several of them and those missed opportunities would prove to be costly, Martin felt. "I felt we missed some opportunities offensively and defensively," Martin said. "We drove the ball pretty well all day; we just didn't finish some drives, and we missed some opportunities on defense, especially in the passing game.

"We didn't make some plays - we batted some balls down - but we didn't; they made the plays and that's why they're moving on."

One turning point could have been a 45-yard touchdown pass from Brady to Pierce with 47.5 seconds left in the second that put Glenbard West in front to stay at 17-14. "We had guys around there," Martin said, "but just not making plays; you've got to make plays."

Edwardsville got the ball to open the second half and West forced a three-and-out, then turned around and scored on a Brady pass to Pihlstrom with 7:46 left in the third term to expand the lead to 24-14. "That's huge," Hetlet said. "We always talk about grabbing the momentum of the game in the second half; whatever happened in the first half is wiped away and it's how we start the second half.

"It was really huge for us to get off the field in the second half and then get a drive and put some things together; that was a big tipping point in the game, and I think, at some point, if you're playing the physical style of game that we do, it's going to wear on a team. They're either going to continue to fight or someone's will is going to break."

West seemed to wrap up the game thanks to a 4-yard run by Ryan Diver early in the final term that put West up 31-14; Edwardsville countered with a 23-yard touchdown pass from Dickmann to Daval Torres to cut the lead to 31-21, but Thomas scored from a yard out in the late going to seal the game and send the Hilltoppers to the semifinals.

Thomas led West with 58 yards rushing and two touchdowns, with Tyquan Cox and Diver each adding 54 yards; Brady was 13-of-18 for 283 yards passing and two touchdowns; Pierce and Diver had five catches each, Pierce for 102 yards and Diver for 68 yards.

Dickmann had 43 yards rushing for the Tigers, while Harris had 10 catches for 119 yards and a touchdown, while Torres had five catches for 56 yards and a touchdown.

The loss ended the high school careers of a talented senior class for the Tigers, and that class is one that Martin will remember for many years. “A very good senior class; a lot of them I coached for many years,” Martin said. “I have more than a coaching relationship with them.

“They're good kids; I'll miss them.”

