

Stephen, Marinko power Tigers to opening post-season win over Chatham Glenwood

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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GRANITE CITY – Once **Edwardsville's boys basketball team** gets going, they're a pretty hard team to stop.

Such was the case Tuesday night when the Tigers shook off **Chatham Glenwood**, who led 12-9 at quarter time after trailing earlier in the quarter, and gradually took control of the game, leading 27-21 at the half and then, thanks to some great outside shooting from **Oliver Stephen** and tough defense, established a 48-25 lead at three-quarter time and went on to take a 67-38 win over the Titans to advance to Friday night's IHSA Class 4A Granite City Regional final.

The 27-1 Tigers will take on the winner of tonight's **Alton-Quincy** game in the final at Memorial Gym, with the winner meeting the Belleville East Regional winner at a site to be determined at 7 p.m. next Tuesday in the Ottawa Sectional, with the sectional final set for 7 p.m. March 10; the Titans were eliminated at 10-18 on the year.

“I thought our guys did a really good job today,” said **Tiger coach Mike Waldo**, “because we played a team that was very well-prepared and tried hard to win. I thought my guys did an excellent job of continuing to do the things we do in practice; they did a very good job of having good effort and good discipline.

“I thought **A.J. (Epenesa)** had an excellent game; we got a lot of open shots because of his presence. He went long stretches of the game without getting the ball, but he did a great job defensively and his presence helped get us a lot of shots, and I thought we did a good job with our defense, the way we pressured and guarding the basket.”

“We played a pretty good first half,” said **Titan coach Todd Blakeman**. “They played us man (to-man) and sagged off a couple of guys and I thought we did a good job attacking, took our time and got the shots we wanted; the second half, they got after us a little bit and went to the 1-3-1 (zone defense) and it gave us fits. It's so long and we got back on our heels.

“Overall, I thought we played a pretty good game, but that's an awfully good team we were playing against. They get the lead and then they pull it out, and they at least spread you, but at the same time, I thought our kids played hard. Coach Waldo's a great coach and that's a great team.”

Stephen led Edwardsville with 18 points, all from behind the arc. “I think he only missed one shot,” Blakeman said. “We didn't give him much the first half; they found him the second half. He's awfully good.”

“Oliver plays good,” Waldo said. “He plays good on defense and he's a good offensive player too, whether it's passing or shooting. I thought we did a good job of finding Oliver.”

Jack Marinko had 16 points for the Tigers, 11 of them in the first half, with **Mark Smith** scoring 15 with 10 rebounds, Epenesa 10 with 13 rebounds, R.J. Wilson five, Zack Doornink two and Caleb Strohmeier one. The Titans were led by Talen Vogler's 14 points, with Montray Logan adding nine and Matt Bahlman four.