

# Chicago Simeon eliminates Tigers 76-64 in Normal Super-Sectional

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**NORMAL – Chicago Simeon** came out of the shooting blocks on fire Tuesday night in the IHSA Class 4A Super-Sectional against **Edwardsville** at Illinois State's Redbird Arena.

Edwardsville wanted to have **Talen Horton-Tucker and Kejuan Clements** shoot from the perimeter and they did.

But they didn't miss; Horton-Tucker was 2-for-4 from behind the arc and Clements went 3-for-4 as the Wolverines shot 46.2 percent from three-point range for the game and allowed Simeon to build up a lead on the Tigers en route to a 76-64 win that sent the Chicago Public League team to this weekend's IHSA Class 4A state tournament in Peoria.

The Wolverines will meet Bolingbrook, 83-57 winners over Naperville North in the DeKalb Super-Sectional at Northern Illinois' Convocation Center, at 7:15 p.m. Friday in the second semifinal game; the winner meets the Chicago Whitney Young-Palatine Fremd winner for the state title Saturday night.

Simeon went to 29-3 on the year with the win; the Tigers were eliminated at 30-2.

“Our guys executed what we wanted to do defensively well,” said **Tiger coach Mike Waldo**. “They're a hard team to cover and we wanted to try to get some help from (Clements) and make them shoot perimeter shots. My guys did a good job of making them shoot perimeter shots; they just made them all.

“We executed pretty good defensively; it's just the guys we were giving shots to made them. You've got to give credit to them.”

The three-balls Simeon made helped stake them to a 21-15 lead at quarter time and extended it to 44-27 at the half, though the Tigers made a run at the Wolverines in the second half, cutting the lead to eight in early in the final quarter.

“Trying to defend four guys making threes is always hard,” Waldo said. “When you try to defend four guys making threes, which we started doing in the first half, you're going to give up stuff around the basket, especially as skilled as they are. That's how we got behind bigger, trying to take those threes away and guard everybody; it's pretty hard in basketball to guard everybody.



“Sometimes you have to pick what you want to give a team and hope they miss; tonight, they didn't miss them. My guys did exactly what we wanted them to do, they made a lot of shots.”



Simeon opened in a box-and-one defense to try to limit whatever damage Mark Smith could do to them. “We wanted to contain (Smith) and make those guys do some stuff they're not used to doing,” said **Wolverine coach Robert Smith**. “We knew he likes to put up shots and control everything; we stayed focused on him. We lost some of the other guys in transition and they made some shots, but we did a great job on him.”

Simeon's accurate shooting helped put some distance between them and the Tigers early, Smith felt. “That was key,” Smith said. “Clements made three of four three-pointers when they left him open; he can shoot the ball as well. It's just a luxury when you have five guys who can score.”

The box-and-one was a defense the Tigers hadn't seen much of this season. “That's a defense we hadn't seen all year,” Waldo said. “We've seen a box-and-one on Oliver (Stephen) and we knew that was coming; it was a good box-and-one. The guy on Mark was quick, although I thought Mark did a great job tonight; he did a great job of scoring when he had a chance and I thought he did a great job of finding us.”

“That's a rangy, fast box and it's hard to get wide-open against it. I do think we executed some good things against it too, but they're just athletic enough and you're not wide-open long enough.”

**A.J. Epenesa** and **Stephen** each had 16 points to lead the Tigers, with Epenesa pulling down **12 rebounds**; **Jack Marinko** had 13 points, **Smith** 12 and **Caleb Strohmeier** seven; **Evan Gilyard** led the Wolverines with 30 points, with Messiah Jones and Clements each scoring 16, with Jones gathering 10 rebounds and Horton-Tucker scoring 12.

Waldo knew that this year's team was a special group. “I think my guys are sad and disappointed, I think, for the right reason,” Waldo said. “I don't think it's because they lost a basketball game; I think they really, really like each other and they like playing together. They've known each other for a long time and they like being on the basketball team playing together.

“They just really admire and respect one another so much; they're just emotional about that. I don't think they're emotional about getting beat; I just think they're emotional about the fact about they really like being together and like playing with each other and respect and admire each other so much.”

