

Tigers open postseason with 2-0 win over O'Fallon; Maroons loom next

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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BELLEVILLE – Edwardsville's girls soccer team had quite a few chances to score in their match against O'Fallon Monday afternoon.

Tiger coach Abby Comerford felt her team could have cashed in a bit more than they did.

That the Tigers did score twice was enough to give them a 2-0 win over the Panthers in Monday's IHSA Class 3A Belleville West Regional semifinal match and sent them to Friday evening's final against the host Maroons, who eliminated Belleville East 2-0 in Monday's other semifinal, at 6 p.m. Friday, with the winner heading to next week's Edwardsville Sectional against the Quincy Regional winner.

Edwardsville advanced to the final with a 12-3-2 record; the Panthers were eliminated at 3-15-1.

“We had some opportunities that we left on the field tonight,” Comerford said. “That's kind of how soccer goes; we could be winning 4-0 – we definitely left quite a few out there. They're (O'Fallon) a good team; they play their hearts out. At this point, nobody has anything to lose – you lose, you go home.

“It's a case that you have to go out 110 percent the entire game; we came out a little slow, they capitalized on it.”

It did take a bit for the Tigers to gather some momentum; play was a bit slow at the start of the match, but once the Tigers scored on a 28th-minute goal from Abby Crabtree, things began to go EHS' way. “Probably the last 12-15 minutes of the half, we definitely calmed down a lot and we were able to play our game,” Comerford said. “We started taking advantage of a few things and be able to get it in.”

Crabtree's goal came off a goal-mouth scramble when Sydni Stevens played the ball in towards Panther goalkeeper Bri Homna; Homna couldn't seem to handle the ball cleanly and Crabtree charged in and gained a quick possession that she knocked into the goal for the first Tiger score.

A couple of minutes later, Stevens broke loose and came towards goal, but her shot bounced off the crossbar and the Tigers couldn't score off the rebound; not long after that, Paityn Schneider gained possession from a feed and headed the ball past Homna for a 33rd-minute goal that extended the lead to 2-0.

Edwardsville picked up the pace in the second half, but couldn't find the back of the net. “We picked it up; again, we just kind of missed our opportunities out there,” Comerford said.

The Tigers got three saves and the clean sheet from Regan Windau. “The entire time, in the second half, the girls played a lot better than what they did the first half,” Comerford said. “We controlled most of the second half.”

For the Tigers, getting past the regional final has been difficult in recent years; last year's team fell to Granite City in a shootout in the Granite City Regional final, the 2015 team lost to Quincy in a regional semifinal match and the 2014 team fell to Granite City in a regional final shootout. When asked if what's happened in recent years was a motivating factor for this year's side, Comerford said “these girls, they've been there; most of them played last year and the seniors have played the last three years. They're definitely motivated to keep going.”



