

Tigers, Redbirds clash in Alton's homecoming game

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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ALTON - Two Southwestern Conference football teams with designs on the 2017 IHSA Football Championship meet at 7 p.m. tonight at Alton's Public School Stadium as Edwardsville takes on Alton in the Redbirds' Homecoming game.

The game will be televised live on Riverbender.com; see: <http://www.riverbender.com/video/live/details.cfm?id=929>

The Tigers enter the contest at 1-3 overall, 1-1 in the SWC having defeated Granite City 52-7 last week at home, while the Redbirds go into the game at 2-2 overall, 1-1 in the league after falling to Belleville West last week on the road. The Tigers stormed out to a 31-0 lead over the Warriors at quarter time, scoring twice in 10 seconds early in the opening quarter to run out winners on the night while the Redbirds saw Belleville West's Kriston Davis score twice and run for 151 yards as the Maroons scored a 20-6 win.

“They've got a lot of players back from last season,” Tiger coach Matt Martin said of the Redbirds. “They're pretty solid up front and it's going to be a big challenge for us this week. They have some good size and have some receivers that can run.”

Edwardsville has reacted well to the loss of Dionte Rodgers for the season after Rodgers underwent shoulder surgery; Antonio Thigpen Jr. has stepped into the role Rodgers occupied last season and responded well to the challenge. “Antonio's done well for us,” Martin said. “He's taken advantage of the opportunity he's gotten.”

The Redbirds are looking forward their homecoming game. “It's something we always look forward to,” said Redbird coach Eric Dickerson. “It's always an exciting time and our kids are really excited this week.

“It's going to be a battle – every game in the Southwestern Conference is. We played well last week; we had some missed opportunities on offense, but we were ready to play.”

Having to contain both Thigpen and quarterback Kendall Abdur-Rahman will provide challenges for the Redbirds “Kendall is a lot similar to (Granite City's) Freddy Edwards; he's versatile and not easy to prepare for,” Dickerson said. “Edwardsville's always a good, solid team; we'll have to be ready and play our game and execute well.

“We've had a good week of practice and we're looking forward to the game.”

After tonight's game, Edwardsville hosts O'Fallon while the Redbirds travel to Belleville East next week.