

Minooka comes calling to Edwardsville in IHSA Class 8A quarterfinal game

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville's football team has another huge test in front of them Saturday evening.

The game will be live on Edglentoday.com and Riverbender.com.

See link below for info about the live stream for the game: <http://www.riverbender.com/video/live/details.cfm?id=955>

The Tigers, coming off a last-second 38-35 win in the second round of the IHSA Class 8A Football Championship over Palatine last week, now faces Minooka of the Southwest Prairie Conference in a quarterfinal game at 4 p.m. Saturday at Tiger Stadium.

Edwardsville enters the game at 8-3 on the season, having won eight games in a row after an 0-3 start; the Indians go into the contest at 9-2 on the year after winning their first two postseason games in overtime, eliminating Niles Notre Dame 22-19 in the opening round and then Barrington 41-34 last week in the second round.

“They’re a very good football team,” Tiger coach Matt Martin said, “a very good defense, they’re very well-coached – their kids play hard. Offensively, they’re a balanced attack running and passing – just solid all away across the board and don’t make too many mistakes.

“They’re just a good football team and they find ways to win.”

The Tigers themselves have battled the last two weeks against Huntley and Palatine, coming away with two hard-fought wins to get to this point. “We’ve found ways to win as well,” Martin said. “We’re starting to mature, we’re executing better and winning the turnover battles. Good things have happened for us.

“Palatine came out and kind of changed their offensive game plan – came out in an empty (backfield) and threw the ball a lot more than we anticipated; we had to make some adjustments and the kids made enough to win the game.”

The Indians’ quarterback is Zach Gessner, a senior who’s thrown for 1,007 yards on the year, hitting on 95 of 118 attempts with nine touchdowns and 11 interceptions. Owen Kapple is the leading rusher with 676 yards on the ground this season with a long of 58 yards and five touchdowns, followed by Connor Etzkorn with 352 yards and eight TDs and Emani Johnson with 175 yards and four TDs. Gessner’s favorite targets are Etzkorn and Kapple with 18 catches each; Kapple has 135 reception yards on the year with a touchdown while Etzkorn has 94 yards; Max Christiano is right behind with 16 receptions for 217 yards and four TDs on the season.

On the defensive side of the ball, Tyler Haase is the Indians' leading tackler with 59 tackles (26 solos and four for loss), with Jack Kropke right behind at 56 tackles (17 solo and three for loss) and Jake Ryan with 39 tackles (23 solo and two for loss), while Jared Price and Brian Kripple each have two sacks each on the year.

The chance to play before the home fans is a big opportunity for the Tigers, Martin believes. "It's a great opportunity," Martin said. "These kids have worked hard; for our community to be able to see them play. It's been tough the last two weeks to have to travel that far, but now they get an opportunity to see how hard these kids have worked and hopefully, we can get a win for the community."

The winner of Saturday's game gets the Winnetka Loyola Academy-Chicago Marist winner in the semifinals; the Loyola-Marist game kicks off at 7 p.m. Saturday in the Chicago suburbs. The upper half of the bracket has Oswego visiting Frankfort Lincoln-Way East at 6 p.m. Saturday and Naperville Central traveling to Park Ridge Maine South for a 1 p.m. Saturday kickoff.