

# **Tigers have big opportunity against Ramblers in Class 8A semifinals**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** – Edwardsville has come a long way in this year's IHSA Class 8A Football Championship. The Tigers have defeated some of the top-ranked teams in the Chicagoland area in Huntley, Palatine and Minooka to reach the semifinals.

Now comes the biggest test the Tigers have faced so far this season – one of the Chicago area's richest and tradition-laden teams in Loyola Academy of Wilmette.

The Tigers will host the Ramblers in a 2 p.m. Saturday semifinal contest, with a berth in Thanksgiving weekend's championship game at DeKalb's Huskie Stadium at stake; Park

Ridge Maine South and Frankfort Lincoln-Way East clash at 6 p.m. Saturday in the other semifinal contest to determine who the Loyola-Edwardsville winner will meet for the state championship.

The Ramblers of the Chicago Catholic Conference's Blue division go into the game at 11-1 on the year, going 4-0 in the league and losing only to Wendell Phillips of Chicago 20-14 in Week 1; the haven't lost since, eliminating Chicago Marist 30-10 in last week's quarterfinal contest. The Tigers have won nine in a row since dropping their first three contests to Naperville North, CBC of St. Louis and East St. Louis; they go into the game at 9-3 on the year, defeating Minooka 28-25 in their quarterfinal game last week.

“We're one of only a few teams still practicing (a total of 32 in eight classes),” said Tiger coach Matt Martin. “It's a big opportunity for us and we're going up against a team that has a great tradition; their record speaks for itself (the Ramblers have been to the Class 8A final in every year but two in this decade).

“They have a great coaching staff (led by John Holecek, who played in the NFL for Buffalo, San Diego and Atlanta from 1995-2002) and a great tradition.”

Loyola depends on a balanced offense between the run and pass. “They run and pass well and they like to stretch the field vertically,” Martin said. “On defense, they like to go out there and get the ball; they run good defensive schemes and are hard-nosed; they're never out of position.

“They're a good, solid team with no weaknesses. We're going to have to play well to have a chance.”

The Ramblers are led by quarterback Quinn Boyle, who has thrown for 1,817 yards on the year with 20 touchdowns – a longest pass of 77 yards – and three interceptions; Boyle is also the Ramblers' leading rusher on the season with 745 yards on 143 carries and six touchdowns, followed by Hamid Bullie, who has 584 yards on the ground and Trevor Cabanban with 208 yards on the ground; he filled in for Bullie in their win over Marist with a 195-yard, two-touchdown performance.

Boyle had 191 yards and two touchdowns in the air in their win last week; he hit Rory Boos six times, two of them for touchdowns, in last week's win. Boos has 35 catches for 740 yards and 10 TDs on the season, with James Joyce catching 47 balls for 556 yards and four scores and Dillon Grant 18 catches for 199 yards and three TDs.

On defense, the Ramblers' leading tacklers were Jake Gonzalez and Christopher Scott with 90 tackles each, Gonzalez having 50 solo tackles and Scott 45 solos; each had seven tackles for losses, while Anthony Rodriguez had 87 tackles (46 solos and eight for

loss); Martin Geary led the Ramblers with six sacks, with Armoni Dixon having five sacks and Anthony Rodriguez three on the year.

“If the kids play well, we'll be in a position to win,” Martin said. “It's a great opportunity for us and we've worked hard and gotten better all season long; we'll have to win the turnover battle, of course, We're very happy to be at home for this one and we're really excited for the opportunity we have.”

