

Tigers shake off slow start, roll past Maroons 65-18 in 4A East regional semi

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
February 15 2018 6:18 AM



SEE COACH LORI BLADE INTERVIEW:



BELLEVILLE - Edwardsville got out of the gates a bit slowly in their IHSA Class 4A Belleville East Regional semifinal game Wednesday night against Belleville West.

Once the Tigers got going, though, stopping them was no easy chore as EHS advanced to Friday night's championship game with a 65-18 over the Maroons; they'll play the host Lancers, 64-48 winners over Collinsville in Wednesday's other semifinal game, at 7 p.m. Friday for the regional title and a trip to next week's Champaign Centennial Sectional semifinal against the Chatham Glenwood Regional winner; either the host Titans or O'Fallon; the site of the game is yet to be determined, with the semifinal winners clashing at 7 p.m. Feb. 22 at Centennial for a berth in the Feb. 26 Illinois Wesleyan Super-Sectional in Bloomington.

Edwardsville's defensive effort did turn into quite a few of offensive chances for the Tigers; Tiger coach Lori Blade felt her charges could have done a bit better on the defensive end, though. "It did," Blade said of the defense turning into offense, "but we just talked to them; our defense has to be better than it was tonight. I thought we reached and we did some things – we have to guard better with our feet and we have to guard smarter, pushing kids to weaknesses a bit better."

Despite the slow start, the Tigers shook it off and began to build a lead on the Maroons, the Tigers getting to a 16-5 lead at quarter time and increasing it to 30-7 at the half; then kept going as the game went on; Quierra Love led the Tigers with 15 points on the night, with Myriah Noodel-Hayward adding 12, Kate Martin 10 and Rachel Pranger nine on the night. Shaniah Nunn led the Maroons with seven points for the game.

Despite being the top seed in the regional, having to play Friday's final against the Lancers on their floor won't be an easy task, Blade feels; top-seeded Normal Community was shockingly dismissed by regional host Bradley-Bourbonnais Tuesday night in a regional semifinal despite having the top seed in that regional. "There's no advantage to being a 1 or a 2 seed when you have to go somewhere and play a lower seed on their floor," Blade said. "That's what I've said all along before that even happened; it is what it is – that is a big motivational point that they had to go to the 7 seed and play.

"It leads to those things happening a little bit more."

The memory of the Tigers losing last year's state championship game in the final seconds is still fresh in the minds of EHS. "It still burns," Blade said. "I've been that close before; these kids haven't. To be that close and come up that short on just a roll of the ball at the last second – it's tough, but that's why you put it on the line for."

