

# **Tigers claim regional championship win in 41-40 thriller over Belleville East**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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BELLEVILLE – One of the natures of the IHSA Basketball Championship – boys or girls - is its' unpredictability.

As in anything can happen at any time to anybody.

Friday night's Class 4A Belleville East Regional final was just such a game. Top-seeded and top-ranked Edwardsville seemed to have things in control on the host Lancers despite the game being close, but East rallied in the final quarter and pulled to 41-40 with one final shot to win the game.

The ball went to B'Aunce Carter for East; she put up the final shot of the game, but the ball rolled off the rim as the siren sounded, allowing the Tigers to survive with a 41-40 win to advance to next week's Champaign Centennial Sectional, where EHS will take on Chatham Glenwood, who eliminated O'Fallon 48-44 in Chatham's own regional final Thursday, at 6 p.m. Monday at Centennial; the final is set for 7 p.m. Thursday, with the winner heading to the Feb. 26 Illinois Wesleyan Super-Sectional for a berth in the March 2-3 Class 4A semifinals.

The Tigers remained undefeated on the year, going to 27-0, while the Lancers were eliminated at 16-9.

“It was a great game,” said Tiger coach Lori Blade. “That had to be a great game to watch; that was a heartbreaker for B'Aunce because she's a real hard worker and she was right there. We've been on the other end of that too, so it's just unfortunate that somebody had to lose this game.”

“Postseason, that's how it goes,” said Lancer coach Amanda Kemezys of the way the Lancers lost, “but that was the most fun game and the most heart-wrenching game at the same time because of the way it ended, but I cannot be more proud of my girls for the effort they gave.

“We threw so much new stuff at them and came up with this game plan that was completely different from anything we've done this season; the girls believed in it every step of the way. They did everything we wanted them to do tonight and we came up literally an inch short. That's the way it goes sometimes.”

The Lancers got out to an early lead on the Tigers, holding a 9-7 at the quarter time before Edwardsville got some key scores from Rachel Pranger and Quierra Love to help get themselves to a 19-13 halftime lead, then holding on to the lead 32-27 at three-quarter time.



“We hit some big shots,” Blade said. “Q hit some runners, we had some shots that just couldn't go down.”

Things stayed close in the final quarter until the Lancers managed to pull close to the Tigers, East riding Carter's hot hand to pull to within a point down in the closing seconds. On that final play, East got the ball to Carter, who dribbled in and let a shot go that hit the back of the rim and rolled for what seemed an eternity but rolled off the rim just as the siren sounded to end the game.

“B'Aunce's pretty heartbroken by missing a layup like that, but we wouldn't had been in that position without her,” Kemezys said. “She put us on her back – the second half for sure – but the majority of the game, she was unbelievable. To be that close, she set us up in that position.”

Pranger led the Tigers with 13 points on the night; Kate Martin added 10 points and Love nine for EHS. Carter led the Lancers with 16 points, with Kaylah Rainey adding eight and Jailyn McClenny and Brittney Nitz scoring six each.

Blade summed up the game simply: “We talked about that; it doesn't matter how ugly it is or how we do it, we just have to find a way (to advance).”



