

# Southwestern never quits in 45-37 loss to Trenton-Wesclin

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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WOOD RIVER – Trenton Wesclin got off to a furious start in Friday night's IHSA Class 2A East Alton-Wood River Regional final, grabbing 17-7 lead at quarter time.

Piasa Southwestern refused to go away, however, and kept things close right down to the end thanks to an 18-point night from Cayden Heyen. In the end, though, the

Warriors came up with the answers they needed to gain a 45-37 win over Southwestern to advance to their own sectional tournament next week against Anna-Jonesboro; that semifinal game will be played at 7 p.m. Tuesday.

The Warriors advanced at 25-4.

Friday's loss was the last game for a group of seniors – Heyen, Justin Bailey, Caleb Robinson and Ben Lewis – that Piasa Bird coach Jason Darr felt “have taken our basketball program to another level.”

“I feel like we're kind of like where we want to be,” Darr said. “We want to continue to kind of climb – especially our four seniors. These guys, I think are averaging 19 wins the last four years in our basketball program; they've been a part of that – some of them have played when they were freshmen.

“That's something good and something to be very, very proud of.”

Friday's game was a tough, physical contest, Darr thought. “I thought they battled – maybe a couple of possessions early, we forced some shots, did some things that we really didn't want to do, but late, I thought we did OK – it was a very, very physical basketball game and if you look at the two different teams, you can probably tell who's going to win the more physical game.”

“Both teams weren't real crisp on offense; I thought we did a real good job of guarding and making things difficult for them,” said Warrior coach Brent Brede. “We weren't as good as we hoped to be offensively, but the seniors we've got and as hard as we played, we're proud to have gotten out with a win, no matter what.

“No matter if it's a one-point win or a 24-point win, you move on to the next thing – survive and advance.”

Brede felt Wesclin's defense was a key to the game. “I thought, in the first half especially, they earned what they got,” Brede said. “We would have loved to be better offensively; we guarded well.”

Piasa rallied back from the first-quarter deficit, making it 20-14 at the half and 32-22 at three-quarter time, then made a move in the final quarter that was stopped by key plays down the stretch; the Warriors hit key shots in the stretch run that kept the Piasa Birds at bay.

Ben Lewis added seven points on the night for Southwestern and Justin Bailey had six; Wesclin was led by Mick Stephens' 14 points, with Hunter Ottensmeyer adding 11 and Nate Brede 10 on the night.

The Wesclin-Anna-Jonesboro winner takes on Wednesday's Pickneyville-Nashville winner at 7 p.m. March 2 in the sectional final, with the winner moving into the March 6 SIU-Carbondale Super-Sectional against the Robinson Sectional champion at SIU Arena.

