

Edwardsville faces Montini in IHSA Class 4A semifinal rematch

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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NORMAL - Baseball immortal Yogi Berra may not have necessarily thought about this weekend's IHSA Class 4A Girls Basketball Championship when he uttered these words:

“It's deja vu all over again.”

This year's semifinals and finals have three of the four teams who took part in last year's tournament: Edwardsville, Lombard Montini and Geneva; only Des Plaines Maine West

is the newcomer of this year's semifinalists; the tournament will be played at Illinois State's Redbird Arena in Normal, as has been the tournament site for the past several years.

Riverbender.com/Edglenotoday.com will be on hand for each memorable moment at state. Watch for game stories, features and breaking news accounts from Normal throughout Friday and Saturday about Edwardsville's girls.

Friday's 5:30 p.m. semifinal between Montini and Edwardsville is a rematch of the semis from last year, where the Tigers eliminated the Broncos thanks to a shot from Makenzie Silvey that gave EHS a 36-35 lead with 27 seconds to go; a free throw from Myriah Noodel-Hayward in the final second sealed the game 37-35 and sent the Tigers to the state final, where they fell to Geneva on a last-second shot. Geneva will meet Maine West at 7:15 p.m. Friday in the second semifinal game of the night, with the winners clashing for the state title at 7:15 p.m. Saturday; the third-place playoff will precede the final at 5:30 p.m.

The Broncos, 33-2 on the year, feature a talented senior class, including Ilyse Pitts, Neena Franklin, Aaliyah Patty and Lindsey Jarosinski; Patty leads the Broncos in scoring with 14.6 points per game, followed by Jarosinski with 10.9 PPG and junior Sam Mitchell with 10.2 PPG. They have lost only to Alexandria Campbell County, Ky., and South Bend St. Joseph's, Ind., this season; in their own holiday tournament, they defeated Geneva 52-50 in the final.

Montini defeated Burbank Reavis and LaGrange Lyons to win the Reavis Regional, then Chicago Kenwood and Lisle Benet Academy in the Hillside Proviso West Sectional before defeating Bolingbrook in Monday's Romeoville Super-Sectional at Lewis University 43-35 to reach the state tournament.

Edwardsville opened the season with four wins in the O'Fallon Tipoff Classic before opening Southwestern Conference play with a win over Collinsville; the Tigers went on to win the prestigious Visitation Christmas Tournament in St. Louis County, defeating area powerhouses Washington, Mo., Kirkwood and Incarnate Word along the way; the win against IWA came when both they and the Tigers were ranked No. 1 in area girls basketball polls. EHS has also defeated St. Joseph's and Whitfield this season.

The Tigers started the playoffs with a win over Belleville West in the Belleville East Regional before surviving a last-second shot from the Lancers in the final to advance to the Champaign Centennial Sectional, where they defeated Chatham Glenwood and Rock Island for the fourth year in a row to move into Monday's Illinois Wesleyan Super-Sectional in Bloomington, where they eliminated Chicago Mother McAuley to reach the state tournament.

The Tigers' senior trio of Kate Martin (16.3 PPG), Rachel Pranger (12.5 PPG) and Noodel-Hayward (10.2 PPG) have led the way for the Tigers this season, with contributions from sophomore Quierra Love and junior Jaylen Townsend throughout the year.

This weekend's games will be live-streamed on the NFHS website via NBC Sports Chicago, the IHSA's television outlet; access to the games are available for a small fee.