

# Marinko's 31, Strohmeier's 10 prove decisive in Edwardsville win

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O'FALLON – Wednesday night's IHSA Class 4A O'Fallon Regional semifinal between Edwardsville and O'Fallon was going to be a tough game to play.

The Tigers found a way to eliminate the Panthers 50-47, thanks to a 31-point night from Jack Marinko; Marinko knew that the game wasn't going to be an easy one. “Coach (Mike Waldo) was getting that point across to us all week that they were on their home floor, they were going to come out and give us their best shot,” Marinko said following the game. “That's what they did and we held them off.”

The Tigers' defensive game plan paid dividends, Marinko felt. “He really had a good defensive game plan for us,” Marinko said of Waldo's game plan. “Jalen Hodge (of the Panthers), we wanted to make him go right and that's what we did and then he dribbled off his foot – that's was part of the game plan, and I thought we executed it pretty well.”

Edwardsville hit only nine times from the free-throw line Wednesday, but Marinko canned four straight down the stretch when the Tigers needed them the most. “We practice free throws every time we go out for practice,” Marinko said, “right when we're tired; I needed that tonight.”

“We just had to seize the game plan tonight (Wednesday),” Caleb Strohmeier, who contributed 10 points to the win, said. “We executed down the stretch and we held on.

“We worked on late-game stuff just like this every day at the end of practice, probably the last hour or so; that really showed out there – we were ready for it.”

The missed free throws were made up for in other ways. “I missed a couple, everyone missed a couple, but we overcame that,” Strohmeier said.

Friday night's Tigers-Maroons clash may well be a very tough game; the Tigers are ready for the challenge the Maroons will bring. “We're excited for it,” Strohmeier said. “We've just got to make shots, that's all there is to it.”

“We'll have a game plan ready for us tomorrow in practice,” Marinko said of the preparations for Friday's game. “We'll be ready to go; we'll need to close down the perimeter a little bit more – they were knocking down threes all over.”

Friday's game is set for 7 p.m., with the winner taking on Friday's Quincy-Alton winner from the Quincy Regional at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Pekin Sectional semifinals; that game will be played at Alton's Redbird Nest.