

Josh Reed's goal in 71st minute clinches regional soccer crown for Tigers over O'Fallon 3-1

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
October 20 2018 6:04 AM





O'FALLON – Josh Reed's header off a corner kick in the 71st minutes clinched an Edwardsville 3-1 win over host O'Fallon in the IHSA Class 3A boys soccer regional final played Friday evening at the Panthers Sports Complex.

The Tigers, now 11-2-2 on the season, advance to the Collinsville Sectional, where they'll face the winner of today's regional final between the Kahoks and Quincy. The Panthers were eliminated with a record of 11-9-2.

This game was similar to a regular season contest between the two on September 20, won by the Tigers also by a 3-1 score. Tiger coach Mark Heiderscheid noted that similarity.

"It's way tighter, because when you look at the first one, it's a similar game, a lot of possession," Heiderscheid said, "but then, our center defender just accidentally has the ball at his feet, and he goes backward, thinking that there's no way a smaller kid can pick it, and he got picked. They walk into the goal. So it's one of those anomalies, almost like a goalkeeper accidentally getting picked off his foot. But then all of a

sudden, we get the goal, we equalize pretty early, and then after that, we just had chance, chance, chance, score.

“This was a lot different that, yeah, we had some possession,” Heiderscheid continued, “but we had shots early, and then miss, and that was almost more disconcerting, where we know in our heads that it could be three of four-nothing at half, but we didn’t finish chances that really, honestly, should have been finished. But then, O’Fallon creates a good goal. It’s down on the counter, they get the ball down the field, it’s across, it’s an excellent goal. Well then, it comes second half, and we have chances early, we, again, don’t finish. So that becomes very tough.”

Despite trailing, the Tigers didn’t panic but stayed with their game plan.

“I don’t think there was panic, because the kids are OK, but they just like to play very fast,” Heiderscheid said. “And with very fast sometimes, it can be a little awkward, in terms of just getting a better shot. In other words, it’s people rushing shots, it’s getting crack, balls are flying over, and therefore, maybe it’s not the best, cleanest hit. And (Steven Merrill)’s a good goalkeeper, he’s big. So, therefore, it’s right to him and he’s blocking things.”

O’Fallon coach Jason Turkington felt his younger players gained valuable experience throughout the season, and it will help the Panthers in the future.

“You know, our young guys got a lot of experience this year,” Turkington said. “We got better as the year went on, they got tons of experience. We lose our senior leading scorer (Jordan Ellis) in the first half to injury, and our kids battled. And we just kind of ended up on the short end.”

The Panthers took the lead in the 31st minutes on a goal by Andrew Mills, who picked up an excellent cross and put in at the near post to give O’Fallon a 1-0 lead. But the Tigers drew level in the second half on a penalty kick goal, and it gave the momentum to Edwardsville.

“The penalty was rough,” Turkington said. “a little bit harsh. But our guys fought hard. There’s no shame in what happened tonight. You’ve got an Edwardsville team that’s senior-laden, with tons of experience, and we’ve got younger guys, and our guys fought hard. At the end of the day, that was kind of the outcome at the end, I guess.”

The Tigers had a couple of great chances early, the first being in the 15th minute when Ethan Miracle sent Cooper Nolan in on a good through ball, but his shot went over the top of the goal. One minute later, Nolan sent Kurt Wright in with another great ball, but an O’Fallon defender recovered in time to break up the play, leaving things scoreless.

The Panthers got the breakthrough in the 31st on the goal by Mills that made it 1-0 for O'Fallon at halftime, but the Tigers had two excellent opportunities go for naught late. It was in the 58th minute when the penalty was given for a trip by a Panther player in the box. A.J. Sullivan stepped up to take the kick, and sent Merrill the wrong way, putting the ball into the right corner to bring the Tigers level at 1-1.

Heiderscheid has plenty of confidence in his players when they take penalties, and the equalizer seemed to settle things down for Edwardsville.

"There's no question," Heiderscheid said. "At that point, we're through. We almost earned another one, because Cooper Nolan got whacked right in the box. But, yeah, he's a guy that's just extremely calm, cool. And so, we've probably got 12 penalty kick takers that would all want that one. But he's a guy that can go in any direction. It's like having Sergio Aguero (the Argentine star who plays for Manchester City in the English Premier League) out there. He's just going to make it. That's huge."

The penalty goal definitely gave the Tigers momentum as Edwardsville put the pressure on the Panther goal. It paid off in the 71st off a corner. A scramble in the O'Fallon box saw the ball deflect to Reed, who headed it in past Merrill to give the Tigers a 2-1 lead. Three minutes later, a similar play saw the ball bounce to Jakob Doyle, who first-timed it to the near post and into the net that gave Edwardsville the 3-1 victory.

The Tigers will play either the Blue Devils or Kahoks in the sectional semifinal on Tuesday night, and Heiderscheid is looking forward to the match.

"Good that you won a regional, but then, now, I've got to immediately now go back to work," Heiderscheid said, "and this is a little tougher, because now, all of a sudden, I have to play this game a little different than the other ones, because before, this is all about making sure you get lots and lots of players ready, and this one here, it became a thing where I had to kind of shorten things in terms of bench a little bit, just because we're trying to play from behind, I've got to keep my classic finishers on the field and just trying to find a way to win a game. So that was tough."

Either team will be difficult to play against because the quality of Quincy's program has been very good over the years, while the Kahoks are returning to their salad days of being one of the area's best teams in the 1970s and 80s.

"Either way, that's a really stiff opponent for sectionals," Heiderscheid said, "say like in a final. I mean, just much different than back in the day, when you might end up in a sectional against a team that's a small school since it was Class A. Now, you're playing the third game of the tournament, and it's Edwardsville against either Quincy or Collinsville. So it's certainly gotten tougher when it comes to tournament play. And that'

It'll be a tough win, and once again, we're down here, as luck would have it, we get a top seed, but we're at O'Fallon, and now, unfortunately, we're still top seed, but we're hopefully not at Collinsville against Collinsville, but either way, against Collinsville or Quincy, it's still going to be tough."

Turkington is very proud of his players and the way they played against the Tigers.

"You know what? I hate losing," Turkington said, "especially at home, but, you know, we scared them. We challenged them, we had them for a long time, and they got us right at the end."

And the future is looking very good for O'Fallon, but there's also a tinge of sadness as well.

"Well, I hate to dismiss any season and move on," Turkington said, "but the fact we had three freshmen play tonight, and a freshman scored the goal. We had three sophomores play significant time, and juniors, three, four or five juniors played a lot. Yeah, you do. But we feel for our seniors; our seniors put in a ton of work into the program. We're going to miss them, and just sad we couldn't win this one for them."



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)