

# **Surtin, Odom pace Tigers with 11 wrestlers qualifying for sectional, Alton also advances three athletes**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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GRANITE CITY – Edwardsville had 11 wrestlers qualify for next week's IHSA Class 3A sectional at Joliet Central as the Tigers won their eighth straight team championship with 210.5 points in the regional tournament held Saturday at Granite City's Memorial Gym.

Belleville West was the runners-up with 130 points, Quincy was third at 129.5, Collinsville fourth with 116, O'Fallon was fifth with 98.5, Alton sixth with 78.5, Belleville East was seventh with 54, and the host Warriors finished eighth with 46.

The Tigers had six individual champions and the Redbirds three, but the Kahoks and Warriors didn't have a champion, although Collinsville qualified four wrestlers for the sectional and Granite one.

Edwardsville coach Jon Wagner thought his wrestlers enjoyed a good day and is looking ahead to the sectional next week.

"Yep, it was a good day," Wagner said. "All the regional championships are special and glad that these guys could do it again. I think they did it in a brief, storied fashion. We got seven guys to the finals, and bring in some guys from the back, and going three-for-three in the third places matches was real cool. Those guys are on their nerves, because they know they've gotta win that one and move on, and going 3-0 felt pretty good."

The most impressive title match of the day was at 138, as Luke Odom survived a near fall in his title bout with Adam Thebeau of Belleville East after being put on his back late in the second period. Odom survived the scare to go on to a 25-10 technical fall win at 5:05 to win his individual championship.

"Yeah, you know, he faced a little adversity there," Wagner said. "He got dumped to his back. You know, that move and that guy had him, and it's not easy to not get pinned. So, he did actually really did a good job getting off; Luke doesn't go on his back very much. That was really special that he could get off his back. He's going to plow forward, as he did that match, and he's going to keep working hard to get to his quest to win a state title this year."

The Redbirds had only six wrestlers entered in this year's regional, and to get three into the title bouts was a big feather in their caps.

"You know, all in all, we've had a pretty competitive day," said Alton head coach Eric Roberson in an interview prior to the finals. "We've got three in the finals, also our 145-pounder, Lucas Tankersley, he's in there, he's been battling, he's been getting better and better as the season's gone on. He's put himself into a position to get to sectionals. We brought six, we've got four still alive."

Roberson had simple goals in mind for the finals.

“Well, obviously, we’re hoping for three regional champs,” Roberson said. “Our heavyweight (Kyle Hughes) is going to have a battle on his hands; the Edwardsville heavyweight’s (Lloyd Reynolds) is pretty good; they’ve had a lot of close matches in the past. Our 126 pounder (Garrett Sims), I think, has a pretty good shot, and our 152-pounder, Pierre Evans, I expect him to wrestle well, and he’s been wrestling well lately. So we’ll see what happens. We’ve got to be a little aggressive, and see what happens.”

The Warriors had the one wrestler, George Kisor at 170 pounds, qualify for the sectional, but had three others qualify as alternates, and it bodes well for the team’s future.

“We only had one guy through, and three alternates,” said Granite head coach John Venne. “I was hoping we’d get a few more guys in; we just had some matches didn’t go our way at the end.”

The Warriors had many younger underclassmen on their roster, and at a time, the inexperience showed. But there’s also reason to feel good about the team’s future.

“Yeah, we’re really young this year,” Venne said, “We had in my lineup today one senior, we had four juniors, but we had quite a few freshmen and sophomores, They’re young kids, and they’re out there working hard, wrestling, making gains. We had a lot of improvement from the beginning of the season to the end of the season. We had, unfortunately, some of the guys just didn’t end up with the result they wanted to have.”

The future is looking very bright for the Warriors, who have one of the premier wrestling programs in the country.

“Yeah, I think things are going to look tough, but I think things are going to be better in the future,” Venne said. “Our young group of kids are good, they’re working to improve. We’re going to now set them up with a plan to help them out so that they’ll be better for next season and the future. Right now, we’re going to spend this week trying to focus on helping George Kisor, our qualifier that we have, to get him prepared to wrestle this weekend, and hopefully, get him through to the state tournament the next weekend. So those are going to be kind of our two focuses this week, making sure help him get ready, and also, have our plan for our young kids’ planning for the future.”

The Edwardsville parade started at 106 when Grant Matarelli defeated Joey Bisiocchi of Collinsville 15-1, but both wrestlers qualified for the sectional. In the 113 pound finals,

Josh Koderhandt of Belleville West took 1:35 to pin Quincy's Blake Peter, while Cameron Varner of Collinsville pinned Granite City's Michael Boyd at 1:49 to go to the sectional.

Edwardsville's defending state champion Noah Surtin then won his 126-pound class with a 19-4 technical fall over Jalen May of Collinsville at 3:35, while Hunter Carter of Quincy took third over LaMonte Barnes of Belleville West 7-5. Sims won his title bout with a 47-second pin over Gannen Kane of Collinsville at 132, while the Tigers' Jack Evans took third with a 3-1 win over Gabe Thomas of O'Fallon.

At 132, Mason Wilke of the Tigers made short work of Sam Segerstrom of Belleville East, while Garrett Lee of Collinsville won a 15-0 technical fall over West's Tyreca Wilbourn. Odom's technical fall occurred in the 138 weight class, while Matthew Peters of Quincy took all of 54 seconds to pin West's Ryan Craune.

In the 145 finals, O'Fallon's Alex Fulton defeated the Tigers' Will Zupanci 3-0, while in the third-place match, Hunter Laminack of West defeated Tankersley 7-2 to advance to the sectional. Then in the 152-pound matches, Pierre Evans, after leading most of the way, won by fall at 5:51 over Jyrique Boone-Hill of West, while Quincy's Kaleb Vahle took third with a pinfall at 5:03 over Drew Evans of Collinsville.

The 160-pound finals saw Hunter Yohn of Quincy defeat Logan Johnson of Belleville West 10-5 for the championship, while Edwardsville's Caleb Harrold pinned David Groetecker of Granite City in only 47 seconds. Next in the 170-pound weight class, East's Aaron Wallace pinned Damien Ross of O'Fallon at 5:55 for the championship, while Kisor scored a pin of West's Kevion Woods at 3:34 to advance to the sectional.

Thomas Culp of Quincy won the 182-pound championship with a 10-0 win over Nathan Hill of O'Fallon, with Edwardsville's Sam Martin scoring a 7-2 win over Riley Elam of West to claim third place and a spot in the sectional. In the 195-pound class, Blake Moss of Edwardsville won his class with a 17-1 technical fall over Jalen Garth of the Kahoks at 3:13, while in the third-place bout, Ethan Tinawo of O'Fallon won third place 3-2 over J.C. Lackey of Quincy.

In the final two weight classes, Josh Anderson won the 220-pound class with a 42-second pin of Terry Thompson of O'Fallon, while Lucas Bodi of Quincy rallied late in regulation to even the bout, then won in sudden death overtime over Granite's Michael Whitford. In the 285 class, Hughes defeated Reynolds in the final 5-2, and Dustin Olmstead of Belleville East won third place with a 6-1 win over Othello Williams of Collinsville 6-1.

The team win also qualifies the Tigers for the team dual meet sectional later this month at a site to be announced. Wagner is still very optimistic that the Tigers will do very well in both meets.

“Right now, we’re just going back individually to see how many guys we can get to the state tournament,” Wagner said, “see how far they can take their season, and that’s our goal now. Our other guys that haven’t qualified for sectionals, that kind of lost out today, and the guys that we have back in the room, they’ll be there on Monday, we’ll keep getting ready, and kind of do it side-by-side, work on the individual, but yet, keep getting ready for dual team when it comes.”

Wagner has had a good feeling about his team all season, and it’s not changing one bit now.

“Just feel good about my guys,” Wagner said, “feel how good they train, You know, they’ve wrestled some good opponents today, and more times than not, we came out on top. We’re going to feel good about that, learn from what we didn’t do right.”

Venne is very optimistic about the future of the Warriors’ program.

“A lot of our freshman and sophomore kids, they’re a hungry group,” Venne said, “they want to learn. And we’re going to try to help those kids with our off-state series, and get them a lot of matches, and hopefully get them some more wins, get some success, and use that as momentum building for the future for those kids.

“It’s been a long season, with a lot of young kids,” Venne also said, “a lot of growing pains. But I think a lot of our kids, it’s going to benefit them in the future.”

Roberson is equally optimistic about the future of the Redbirds’ wrestling team as well.

“Right now, obviously, with the fact we brought only six kids here, the rest of our team was young and inexperienced this year,” Roberson said. “So, we have a pretty large group of freshmen, eighth graders coming in for next year. So I think the future looks bright, but we’re definitely in a rebuilding mode right now. The desire, and the passion for the sport, and the desire to get better is there. So we just need to keep creating that atmosphere, where kids want to come out and stay out, and work hard, and try to get better. That’s what we’re focused on is improvement. We can’t focus on wins and losses right now, so we’ve got to focus on improvement and get better.”





[Steven Spencer also contributed to this story.](#)