

Redbirds, Maroons Collide in Sectional Semifinal at Edwardsville

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EDWARDSVILLE – It'll be two familiar Southwestern Conference teams going up against each other on Tuesday night, as Alton (22-9) meet up with defending IHSA Class 4A champions Belleville West (29-4) in the East Moline United sectional semifinal, which will be played at Edwardsville's Lucco-Jackson Gym. The tip-off is set for 7 p.m.

This will be the fourth meeting of the season between the Redbirds and Maroons. West won the first two meetings, taking a 62-57 win over Alton in the final of the Centralia Holiday Classic Dec. 29, then winning in a league game at the West gym 61-55 Jan. 4. The Redbirds won the return league match Feb. 20, 44-43 on a Josh Rivers three at the buzzer.

The most closely watched individual matchup will be between two of the area's best players, Alton's Donovan Clay and West's E.J. Liddell. In the Redbirds' regional win at Collinsville last week, Clay scored 15 points in the semifinal against Springfield High, then had 20 against the host Kahoks in Friday night's final, defeating Collinsville 58-48. Clay held the Kahoks' best player, Ray' Sean Taylor, to a season-low 10 points.

For the season, Clay, who will play for Valparaiso University in



college, averages 19.6 points and 2.8 rebounds-per-game, and Clay's teammates are equally as good. Malik Smith averaged 13.9 points-per-game, while Moory Woods averages 9.8 points, and also is the Redbirds' point man on assists. Rivers has a scoring average of 8.9 points-per-game, while Andrew Jones averages 6.1 points. Charles Miller, Ky'lun Rivers and Izeal Terrell come off the bench to add some spark to the Redbird lineup.

Liddell, who signed with Ohio State early in the season, averages 20.2 points and 9.3 rebounds-per-game, and he's helped out by Lawrence Brazil III, with a scoring average of 12.8 points, Keith Randolph, Jr., with a 9.0 average, Will Shumpert, at 9.2 points, and Jaylin Mosby, who has an 8.6 average. Tommie Williams averages 4.8 points off the bench, and Marcellus Romious carries a 2.4 points-per-game average.

For the Redbirds, it's their fourth trip to the sectional in the last five seasons and will look to advance to its second Sweet Sixteen in the last four seasons. The Maroons won their third straight regional championship, getting past Chatham Glenwood 52-43 at home Friday night.

The winner advances to the sectional final Friday night at East Moline United, with a game against the winner of Danville and Pekin awaiting the victor.

The sectional winner goes on to the super-sectional March 12 at Illinois State University's Redbird Arena against the winner of the Aurora East sectional, either Bolingbrook, West Aurora, Aurora Waubonsie Valley or Oswego East. The state finals are set for March 15-16 at Carver Arena in Peoria.