

East St. Louis Takes Down Mascoutah to Win Sectional Championship

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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EAST ST. LOUIS - For Terrance Hargrove Jr and the East St. Louis Flyers, a year after falling short at this exact hurdle, victory feels priceless.

The Flyers won the Class 3A Mascoutah Sectional Finals with a convincing 77-60 victory over the host Indians in front of a packed, sold-out crowd on Friday night. This is the first sectional East St. Louis has claimed since the 2011-12 season. The Flyers (27-6), ranked No. 4 in the AP Class 3A polls, advance to the Springfield Super-Sectional and will take on the No. 3 Springfield Southeast Spartans (30-2) at the Bank of Springfield Center on Tuesday at 7 p.m.

Last season, the Flyers lost in gut-wrenching fashion, to Marion 71-68 on a buzzer beater. Now they're one win away from their first final four appearance since 2000.

“It means so much,” Hargrove said. “It’s very big. This is a special occasion for us. We came out. We played hard. This is a big win for us it’s very special. We’ll enjoy this moment and get back in the lab tomorrow, but on Tuesday we’ll take care of business.”

Six-foot-7 senior forward, Richard Robinson played the game of his life for Eastside. He notched career-highs in points and rebounds with 24 and 16, including two dunks in the

second half. Hargrove, another 6-foot-7 forward and Saint Louis University commit, followed with 16 points and 13 boards.

"Richard played well," East St. Louis head coach Mark Chambers said. "We challenged Rich this week; the team challenged Rich this week, and he responded. We know with him and TJ together down there, if they're playing well, it makes us hard to stop."

Additionally, Cornelius Leflore added 13 points and drained three triples while junior guard Jashawn Anderson chipped eight points and six assists.

Coming off an impressive 77-50 victory over Highland in the Sectional-Semifinals, Mascoutah matched East St. Louis' energy early on, but were never able to their two top leading scorers, Shawn Weinstroer and Malik Green going. The two would combine for 12 points. Sophomore Cedric Rhodes led the Indians with 17 points while Jarred Johnson and Aly Keys each had 11.

"That sealed the deal. We made a concerted effort to shut their top guys down, and we did a good job at it," Chambers said. "They knew how we were going to guard them and came out and did it. We knew we had to shut those two down."

Mascoutah matched East St. Louis' energy early on, but a late spurt by the Flyers earned them a 21-14 lead after the first quarter. The Indians managed to stay with the Flyers and got to within four, but East St. Louis wouldn't let them get any closer and got up by eight at 35-27 at halftime. That's when they made their run.

"Going into the second half, we wanted to push the envelope a little bit and try to speed them up," Chambers said. "On the defensive side of the ball, we really focused on it. On the offensive side, we really attacked them."

The Flyers outscored the Indians 22-15 in the third quarter. LeFlore and Robinson combined to drain three treys to help boost their team's lead to 53-33, but Mascoutah trimmed it to 57-42 heading into the fourth.

Elijah Rice canned a three on the Flyers first possession, and moments later Hargrove sent the East St. Louis faithful into a frenzy as threw down a windmill slam dunk."

"Game changer," Hargrove said with a smile. "It got the crowd hyped. It got me hyped. It got everybody hyped. I love it. I love that type of atmosphere."

The score would get as high as 74-50 before both sides emptied their benches.













