

Miracle, Hockett Score In Second Half, Tigers Win Class 3A Soccer Regional 2-0 Over Warriors

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Brynn Miracle scored in the 46th minute, and Macie Hockett added insurance with a 79th-minute penalty kick goal to give Edwardsville a 2-0 win over Granite City in the IHSA Class 3A girls soccer regional final Friday afternoon at Tiger Stadium.

The Tigers advance to the Moline Sectional semifinal on Tuesday evening against the winner of the Alton regional final, either Alton or O’Fallon, at Collinsville High School.

The conditions, as they were on Wednesday in the regional semifinals, turned up sunny and very warm, and the Tigers’ depth and ability to substitute freely, proved to be an important factor in the match.

“I’m super excited for these girls,” said Edwardsville head coach Abby Federmann. “Conditions were hot, Granite’s always a tough competition. I felt that we played together, kept it as clean as we possibly could, and we were able to counter off of their mistakes, with a great cross and a super finish from Brynn Miracle. She’s been in the right time in the right place often, but she hasn’t been having the chances to finish, and it felt really good that she got that opportunity. And I thought that we just played our game, finally. We didn’t submit to what they were trying to do, to some of their fouls, we were just able to keep calm and play our game.”

The Tiger players keeping their poise also proved to be a deciding factor.

“And they did,” Federmann said. “They kept their poise. I said at half, I was rotating my entire bench in the entire game to try to keep everybody cool, and keep their legs as fresh as possible in this heat, and it’s just so wonderful to see how deep our team really is, because of the girls who come in, and the flow doesn’t ever change. Everybody’s just working to better themselves and better each other, and there’s nobody who comes in that’s going to put us in harm’s way, and it’s a wonderful feeling to know I’ve got such a deep bench.”

The Tigers’ depth will play a major factor the deeper Edwardsville goes on in the state tournament series, and Federmann knows that her team is ready to go, no matter what.

“It’s a huge plus,” Federmann said, “and they’ve put the effort in it all season long in training, and their numbers are getting called now, and they’re really rising up. We’ve had some injuries that we’re dealing with, and you know, it’s just nice to know that everybody’s willing to work hard for each other, no matter who I put in, and where. Everybody’s playing different positions as well. It’s great.”

Although the Warriors lost, the team battled for the entire 80 minutes, but as with Edwardsville, depth became a factor for Granite.

“The first 40 was very good; it was pretty much even,” said Granite City head coach Kenny Prazma. “The second 40, it looked like we were a little more tired than they were. And obviously, their depth comes into play, being able to sub in a few more girls than what we can. I think the girls got tired, starting getting a little frustrated, made a few mistakes here and there, weren’t moving off the ball, and it ended up, they got a good goal. And they made a couple more mistakes, and then gave them a penalty kick, thus, 2-0.”

The Warriors gave a great effort all season, and Prazma gave credit to his team.

“It was a very good season, whether or not we lost in the regional,” Prazma said. “Obviously, we’d have like to gone a lot further. I thought we probably would have made a nice run, hopefully, but all that’s kind of moot now.”

The Warriors do lose eight seniors to graduation, but there will be new players coming through the ranks, and it’s all part of the legacy of Granite City soccer.

“One thing about Granite City, they usually, at least, we get the players that want to come in and play,” Prazma said. “Hopefully, we have a decent amount of freshmen coming in next year, kind of rebuild with that. We rebuild our program. But yeah, we still have plenty of life left in us for next year, and the years to come.”

Both teams spent the first 10 minutes feeling each other out, with both having a couple of chances that went by the boards. The Tigers had the first big chance after 15 minutes, when Miracle set up Rileigh Kuhns, but the shot went just over the top. Three minutes later, the Warriors had the match’s first corner, but a header missed connections, keeping things scoreless.

In the 26th minute, Granite’s Kasey Niedhardt had a good chance off a through ball, but Rachel Hensley in the Edwardsville goal was there to stop the chance. One minute later, the Warriors had another opportunity off a good run, but a crossing pass was intercepted, keeping things goalless. Then in the 33rd minute, Lauren Gardner had a nice cross to Kiera Delgado, but the pass just failed to click. Two minutes later, Megan Jones had a good shot at goal, but in the ensuing scramble, the ball was cleared, and the first half ended up 0-0.

Kuhns had the first big opportunity of the second half after 44 minutes, but her shot just went wide. One minute later, Kuhns beat a pair of Granite defenders on a nice run, getting the ball to Hannah Bielicke, who crossed it over to Miracle, who put the ball in first-time to give the Tigers a 1-0 lead.

The Tiger had a pair of chances go awry immediately following the goal, and a Granite cross off a corner was cleared away in the 50th minute, keeping things at 1-0. Both sides then had numerous chances that were either stopped by the goalies or cleared defensively as the match wore on. Late in the match, in the 78th minute, Bielicke was tripped in the box by Warrior goalie Olivia Brinker, who was booked on the play and had to come out. Rebecca Loftus came in, and stopped Kuhns from the penalty spot, but one minute later, another Granite foul in the box led to a second penalty kick, which resulted in a booking for Emma Vanbuskirk on the foul and Abby Reeves for dissent. Hockett stepped up and converted the spot kick to make the final 2-0 for the Tigers.

Although the Warriors finished the season 12-6-3, the program's tradition is still as strong as ever.

"That's kind of what I told the girls," Prazma said. "When you put the Warriors' soccer shirt on, it kind of means a little bit more, because of the tradition that we have, with the state championships and coach (Gene) Baker, and I think it should mean something to the girls, because of the fact there is such a great tradition in Granite City, and Granite City soccer."

The Tigers are now 14-8-0, and move on to Tuesday's sectional semifinal against the Redbirds-Panthers winner, and Federmann is looking forward to the match.

"It's going to be another tough one," Federmann said. "Alton, we were able to dominate, I think, most of the game the last time we played them, scoring three in the first half, then giving my seniors the opportunity to play a lot in their Senior Night game. O'Fallon's just a super physical game. I think we'll be prepared for whatever. I think we've got a fire under us, and we're just going to try to push forward."

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