

# Weller's Goal Off Corner Kick After 30 Minutes Give Tigers 1-0 Win Over O'Fallon, Advance To Sectional Final

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BELLEVILLE - Brennan Weller scored the only goal of the match on the half-hour, heading in a ball off a corner kick to give Edwardsville a hard-fought 1-0 win over O'Fallon in the IHSA Class 3A Normal Community West sectional semifinal on a dreary, cold and rainy Tuesday evening at Belleville East's Charlie Woodford Field.

The goal came about when Weller was able to head in a pass from Kurt Wright from the far post off of Jakob Doyle's corner in the 30th minute. It was something the Tigers had worked on in practice the day before, and the work paid off beautifully in the end.

And afterwards, Edwardsville coach Mark Heiderscheid had some mixed feelings about the outcome.

"Well, it's always mixed emotions, because I really respect Jason Turkington (the O'Fallon coach) for O'Fallon, and it's one of those where, obviously, like I told him in an E-mail, because we E-mailed back before the game, he's congratulating me on a couple of things here recently, and just because of the classy guy that he is, and we have a lot of mutual respect for each other. When you win a game like this one, it's one where, let's face it, during the game, I would bleed half my blood just to find a way to win a game, and yeah, when it comes to the conclusion, that I can't help but always feel a little bit for the other team and the other coach, who's just competing just as hard as what I am.

"Having said so, it's good to go and play in a sectional final again," Heiderscheid continued. "I mean, it's great for the kids. We've come close, you know, pretty much every year. And so, in the years that you don't, it's very disappointing, and the game can turn so quickly on just one thing. We had some good chances, but not super clear cut moments. That's because O'Fallon's quickness, and whatnot, really was making things difficult for us. We worked on an hour of corner kicks, another 15 minutes on throw-ins the other day, just because the size of the field doesn't allow us to knock it around as effectively as it was on ours. So we had to go ahead and change our game just a bit. Unfortunately, it got a little bit too much kickball out here, but at the same time, we were able to, on the one play, get a couple of headers, get some tall kids, and we were able to nod it in, and it's one of those where, really, the goal is fine, because it's a goal.

"But it wasn't kind of an artistic game in some respects that we've had recently," Heiderscheid also said. "Yet, it's good to have a grinder game on this where absolutely playoff-type game, very tough game, decently physical, but not at all dirty on O'Fallon's part whatsoever, just going in hard in that. And so, I think it's good to win those 7-0, 7-1 games, and at times, it's good to seize new against a team that is just quick, and can connect it, and makes it so difficult to just find a seam to get through. That's what's going to be helpful for us in the playoffs; we just haven't had a team that really mashed up and quicked us as O'Fallon was able to do tonight."

In the first half, it was Edwardsville who had the much better of the play, being able to move forward for most of the opening period and getting some good chances, but Panther goalie Steve Merrill was there to cover up. The Tigers got on the board in the 30th minute off of Doyle's corner, where the ball went to Wright, who crossed it to the middle of the box, where Weller was able to head it into the corner of the net to give Edwardsville a 1-0 lead.

The Panthers did have a big chance before halftime, getting a shot from Toby Ybarra, but Tyler Frolik dived across to make the save, preserving the Edwardsville 1-0 lead at the interval.

O'Fallon did have a pair of good chances in the opening five minutes of the second half, where Luke Sheerin broke in in the 45th minute, but was denied by Frolik and the Tiger defense, and one minute later, a ball put into the Tigers' box created a few anxious moments, but the ball was cleared away to preserve the lead.

The Panthers did have a glorious chance in the 53rd minute when Rafa Rollan won a ball along the byline, and Frolik was caught off his line. The ball came to Ybarra, who shot wide left, keeping the score 1-0 for Edwardsville. The Tigers had a pair of opportunities to double the lead from Logan Loftus and Weller, but Merrill was there both times to smother the ball and keep the scoreline where it was.

In the final minutes, both teams had some good chances, especially for O'Fallon as they tried to find an equalizer and force extra time, but Merrill and Frolik stood their grounds, Frolik especially in the 75th minute, where he dived out to stop a shot from Ybarra, and in the 77th minute, easily getting a bicycle kick from Rollan as the clock wound down and the final siren went to give the Tigers their 1-0 win.

The Panthers' season ends with a 15-5-2 record, while the Tigers are now 19-4-1 and advance to the sectional final for the first time since 2014, and will meet up with Moline, a 3-2 winner over Joliet West in the other semifinal played on Tuesday evening. Heiderscheid is looking ahead to the sectional final.

"Well, I date back about 15 years with Rick Sanchez, the coach," Heiderscheid said with a smile, "and he's been at Moline for an awful long time. He's, I think, a true merit to the sport; I mean he, like Turk, has given so much since his playing days, and then, just the high school program for such a long time. Moline, typically, very quick on the ball, keeps it on the ground, they'll play hard, they're going to be physical, they play in a stout conference (the Western Big Six). I mean, they're the fifth seed, but so many times, that's so misleading, because when you play some tough soccer games, you're going to lose games, and so, therefore, you don't get the seed when the reality is, you're a very tough program. And sometimes, some teams come up and they have better records maybe because, sometimes, you may not have seen the toughest schedule at times, or maybe you've just been very successful. I think teams like Moline that take a number of losses, but they grind things out, I think they're just a difficult team to play. And I've seen them plenty of times up in the Morton tournament. They're always a stout team to have to play against."



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