



Tigers Fight To The Finish, But Crusaders Win IHSA Sectional Semifinal Volleyball Match 25-22, 25-21

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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O'FALLON - The Edwardsville High girls volleyball team fought hard and rallied back from late-set deficits, but in the end, Belleville Althoff Catholic came up with the answers and ended the Tigers' season in the IHSA Class 4A O'Fallon sectional semifinal match, defeating Edwardsville 25-22, 25-21 Monday evening at the Panther Dome.

The Tigers' very successful season ended with a 31-7 record, but Edwardsville kept fighting all the way through the match.

"Oh, yeah. They've grown a ton this year," said head coach Lisa Orlet. "We still had a couple of sophomores on the floor at times, and I'm really proud of the way that they fought. They've come a long way since the start of this season. I've been very proud of them."

The Tigers came from behind to cut Crusader leads in both sets, only to come up short in the end, but there's nothing to be ashamed of in the Edwardsville efforts all season.

"Right. Absolutely nothing to be ashamed of," Orlet said. "They've had a wonderful season, and the girls, you know, they've got a bright future. Maddie (Isringhausen) and Lexie (Curtis, the team's two graduating seniors) have left a wonderful mark on this program, and I know that their leadership will carry over into next season as well."

And there's always plenty of great moments to be proud of as well, both on and off the court. Orlet was very proud to see how well the team bonded together and became a very close-knit group.

"Oh, I think the laughter, I think the girls getting to know each other," a very proud Orlet said, "I think the girls bonding, and playing as a team are my favorite parts."

The Tigers evolved into that very close-knit group, and although Isringhausen and Curtis will be graduating, there's still plenty of talent coming back. Juniors Storm Suhre, Alexa Harris Rihanna Huebner and Morgan Tulacro will be key returnees, along with sophomores Gabby Saye and Emma Garner. There's indeed a bright future ahead.

"Definitely," Orlet said. "We're still very young, but they've grown a lot, and I think that, like I said, under Lexie and Maddie's leadership, we're going to carry a lot over next season."

The opening set was a back-and-forth style of set at the beginning, with neither team being able to lead by more than two points when, at 10-8 for Althoff, Mia Orlet, the daughter of the Edwardsville coach, served up four consecutive points, including a kill from Karinna Gall, that extended the lead to 14-8. Eventually, the lead became 22-16 for the Crusaders when the Tigers rallied behind the serving of Isringhausen, who came up with four straight points of her own to cut the lead to 22-20 before Althoff got the ball back. Back-to-back kills by Harris cut the Crusader advantage to 23-22, but Mary Wessel tipped home to bring the score to 24-22, and a Tiger spike went long, giving the first set to the Crusaders 25-22.

The two sides split the first four points of the second set before the Tigers went on a run behind Garner's service, getting a combined tip from Suhre and Isringhausen, an ace and another Suhre kill to take a 6-2 lead. A Gall kill got the ball back for Althoff, and the Crusaders scored the next two points to cut the deficit to 6-5 before the two teams exchanged points. Kills from Grace Streiker and Gall gave Althoff an 8-7 lead, forcing an Edwardsville time out. After the time out, the two teams again exchanged points before Wessel served up back-to-back points to give the Crusaders a 17-12 lead. Suhre then put down a sizzling kill to give the Tigers the ball, and again, Suhre and Isringhausen combined on a block to cut the lead to 17-14. Another exchange made it 19-15, then, with Gall serving, Althoff went on another run, with Streiker tipping home

a point and Payton Jackson also getting a kill to give put the Crusaders up 21-15. The Crusaders eventually made the score 24-18 and match point, but the Tigers, behind strong play from Suhre and Garner, cut the lead to 24-21, but Althoff closed out the match on a kill from Gall to make the second set final 25-21, putting the Crusaders through to the sectional final.

Althoff is now 33-3 and will go against Minooka, a 25-12, 25-15 winner over Normal Community in the other semifinal, played at Ottawa High School, in the sectional final on Wednesday, the match starting at 6 p.m. The Tigers season may have ended, but Orlet thanked all the fans for their support throughout the year.

"Thanks to all the fans who came out to support the Tigers," Orlet said.













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