

# **Ruklic Scores Twice, Schuster Has Three Assists As Tigers Score Three Times In Third, Wins First Game Of Season Over Seckman 4-2**

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EAST ALTON - Anthony Ruklic scored twice, including the game-winner in the third period, while Will Schuster had three assists as Edwardsville scored three times in the third period, including twice in a 58-second span, to defeat Seckman of Imperial, Mo. 4-2 to give the Tigers their first Mid-States Club Hockey Association win of the season Thursday night at the East Alton Ice Arena.

The Tigers played well, and also successfully killed off a five-minute power play to the Jaguars after Gabe Noll was given a major for head contact late in the first period, and a game misconduct. In the long run, the penalty kill played a big part in the outcome of the game.

"I thought we played well," said Edwardsville head coach Jason Walker. "I give the Seckman team credit; they played really well. Their goaltender (Jack Kroll) was good. They did a good job in limiting our scoring chances, and their goalie made some big saves. And I give credit to our guys; they stuck with it, had a couple of big penalty kills there, especially that five-minute kill. And then, had a great third period."

The Tigers penalty kill units did a tremendous job in killing off the five-minute power play, which carried over into the first part of the second period, and kept the score tied at 1-1 when the Jaguars could have taken control of the proceedings.

"Yeah, to kill that penalty off, obviously, that was huge," Walker said. "Five minutes is a long time, and the guys did a good job keeping them off the scoreboard there."

Even after Seckman took the lead later in the second period, the Tigers stuck with their game plan, which eventually paid off in the third with the two goals in 58 seconds that turned out to be the game-winners.

"That's the sign of a good hockey team," Walker said, "when you can find a way to finish it off there, and find a way to have your best shifts when the game is on the line, and they did. We had our best players step up in those big moments tonight, so we're happy, we're moving on to the next one."

It didn't take the Tigers long to get on the board first. In fact, it only took 21 seconds from the opening face-off, when Ruklic took a Schuster pass and rifled the puck home past Kroll to give the Tigers the lead on 1-0. The Tiger defense played well, limiting the Jaguar chances, but at 8:54, Seckman tied it up when Grant Tammings skated in alone and beat Edwardsville goalie Jonas Akeman with a good shot for an unassisted power play goal to make it 1-1. Ruklic was off at the time for slashing, which set up the goal.

Both defenses clamped down and played well, with the scoring chances being limited, and when they did occur, both Akeman and Kroll came up with the saves to keep the score tied 1-1 after the period, which saw the Tigers outshoot the Jaguars 10-6.

Late in the first, Noll was ejected after being assessed the five-minute major for head contact, a penalty which carried over into the first part of the second period. The Tiger penalty killing units did a great job in killing the penalty, not allowing very many chances for the Jaguars. And when there was a chance, Akeman was there to make the save, keeping the game tied at 1-1.

It turned out to be a big kill when later on, at 6:42, Tyler Culleton got the puck in front and scored the Jaguars' second unassisted goal of the night to give Seckman the lead 2-1. Undaunted, the Tigers peppered Kroll with some good shots, but Kroll made the saves as Seckman took their 2-1 lead at the end of the period. The Tigers again led in shots 10-5 for a two-period total of 20-11.

Edwardsville then went on to their two-goal span in 58 seconds to take the lead for good. First, Sam Gibbons scored off a scramble in front of the Seckman goal, seeing a shot just get by Kroll and trickle into the net at 4:46 to tie the game 2-2. The Tigers then got the go-ahead goal from Ruklic, scoring at 5:44 after a Schuster set-up to give Edwardsville a 3-2 lead.

It stayed that way until Tiger captain Mark Tucker took a lead pass from Schuster, skated in and put the puck past Kroll at 9:26 to give Edwardsville some insurance, making the score 4-2. From there, Akeman shut the door on the Jaguars, getting help from his defense as the Tigers outshot Seckman in the period 13-4, and in the game 33-15 as Edwardsville took the 4-2 win.

It was the first win of the season for the Tigers, who gained a 2-2 draw against DeSmet last Friday night, making their record on the young season 1-1-1.

"Off to a good start, and right back at it tomorrow," Walker said with a smile.

That game tomorrow is will be against Westminster Christian at the Queeny Park rink in west St. Louis County, with the face-off coming at 8:15 p.m. It's the first Edwardsville game in their new division, the Suburban, but Walker and the Tigers haven't really given much thought to the switch in divisions.

"You know, we really haven't put much thought into it," Walker said. "We've played three games, against two familiar opponents, and tonight's not so much. So we're just taking it a game at a time, and not really worrying about the schedule as much as just making sure we're playing our best hockey."





