



Tucker's Two Goals, Including Third Period Power Play Goal, Helps Edwardsville Defeat Summit 5-2, Gain Big Step Towards Division Title

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EAST ALTON - Mark Tucker's two goals, including a big third-period power-play goal, helped Edwardsville to a 5-2 win over Rockwood Summit of Fenton, Mo., in a Mid-States Club Hockey Association Suburban Division game Thursday night at East Alton Ice Arena.

The win puts the Tigers' record to 12-5-2 with two regular-season games left, still a point behind the Falcons' 13-4-1 mark, 27 points to 26, but Edwardsville did sweep the season series against Summit, which would give the Tigers the tiebreak for first place should the two teams end up tied at the end of the season.

"First off, special teams was good tonight for us," said Tigers coach Jason Walker. "The biggest thing is just we were hard on the puck. We had two guys within seven to 10 feet

of the puck the whole night, we supported the puck well, and we skated really well tonight. What we always talk about, we always want to be a tough team to play against. We were a tough team to play against tonight."

The matchup against the Falcons was a good one for Edwardsville, and the Tigers were ready to go.

"They're a good team, especially their top line is tough," Walker said, "and they've got a lot of speed. So, we knew it was going to be a tough game, they guys came out, and we got off to that weird start with a bunch of penalties on both sides, and once we got rolling into the five-on-five game, I thought our game picked up."

The Tigers had two power-play goals as well, which were a big factor in the outcome of the game.

"That's something, obviously, has been issues for us this year at certain points," Walker said. "The special teams were very good tonight, so we've just got to keep that going."

The two goals from Tucker were the biggest goals of the game, and perhaps the season for Edwardsville.

"Yeah, he's been amazing all year," Walker said. "Not only one of our best defensive forwards, but also just what he contributes as far as offense goes. He's been awesome."

And it's a simple formula that's helped Tucker have such a standout year.

"Well, I mean, it's just hard work," Walker said. "He's one of the hardest workers on our team, definitely one of the hardest workers in the whole league. He gets his shot off quick, and when he gets around the net, he gets that puck off his stick quick. It's tough to react to it if you're a goaltender."

Parker Terch also had a key goal off the inside of the post just before the end of the first period that gave Edwardsville its first lead of the night.

"First off, it was a great shot," Walker said. "I mean, right under the bar, so Parker's got a great shot from the point. Found a way to get through a lot of traffic. I don't know if the goalie saw it, but it was a really good spot."

The two sides started off very physically, with two quick penalties being called in the game's first minute, but neither power play was able to cash in. But with Edwardsville's Aiden Stevens serving a tripping penalty, Summit was able to cash in at 6:12, when Neil Cerrato scored the opening goal, taking a centering pass from Michael Lane to put the

puck past Tiger goalie Jonas Akeman and give the Falcons a 1-0 lead. Zach Martin also assisted on the play.

It didn't take all that long for Edwardsville to equalize, and they did so at 11:36, when Sam Gibbons scored on a nice shot from the slot, assisted by Nate Frey and Terch, to tie the game up 1-1. Then at 14:41, Terch hit a shot from the left point that hit off one of the posts and went into the net past Summit goalie Bailey Marler to make it 2-1 at the end of the first period.

The physical nature of the game up throughout the period, and early in the second, with Garrett Doolin off for interference, the Falcons tied it up on the power play when Martin scored off assists from Eric Battelle and Cerrato to make it 2-2. But Edwardsville went ahead for good on an Edwardsville power play. On a double minor for roughing against Martin, Tucker scored what proved to be the game-winner at 5:50 when he tucked home a centering feed from Stevens, with Will Schuster also assisting, to give the Tigers a 3-2 lead. The physical play continued, with penalties being called, but both Marler and Akeman were equal to the tasks in goal for both sides as the period ended with Edwardsville holding on to their lead.

Another power-play goal helped early in the third gave the Tigers some breathing room, and it happened at 1:06 with Jamen Massara off for tripping. Tucker scored on a scramble in front, with Terch and Collin Salter assisting to make it 4-2. An unassisted goal by Stevens off a breakaway at 8:15 gave Edwardsville its final 5-2 margin.

For the game, the Tigers outshot the Falcons 27-21.

Edwardsville has two regular-season games left, both in the division and play Parkway West tonight at the Maryville University Hockey Center in Town and Country, Mo., in a 7:50 p.m. face-off, then host Fox High of Arnold, Mo., in the regular-season finale next Thursday at 8:45 p.m. The Tigers do own the tiebreak should they and the Falcons end up level on points, and Walker knows that's it's a great feeling indeed.

"Yeah, it's great that we've got two regular-season games left," Walker said. "Big win tonight, but it's on to the next. We've got to play in less than 24 hours here against another tough opponent, so we'll be ready for Parkway West tomorrow."

The Tigers have been playing well since the calendar turned over into 2020, and the formula has been a very simple one.

"First off, like I said with tonight, just being tough on the puck," Walker said. "We've been doing better with the puck when we have possession, and when we're chasing it down, we've really been relentless on our forecheck, and that's been a positive. Special

teams have been better, and our goaltenders (Akeman and John Paul Twombly), both goaltenders have been playing really well. You get that mix, and the guys are just feeling good about themselves."

And to win the division in their first year after competing in the Municipal Division with many of the league's powers the Tigers' first three years in the MSCHA, would be a big feather in their caps.

"Yeah, I mean, that's one of the things we talked about at the beginning of the year," Walker said, "that would be a nice goal to achieve. So we're more focused on the short-term now, the one at a time, but when we look back at it, I'm sure that we'll feel really good about it if we can accomplish that."