



Live On Riverbender.com: Long-Awaited Football Season Returns With Edwardsville At Alton

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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ALTON - It's been a long time coming, and after a fall and winter of much uncertainty and doubt, the Illinois high school football season finally will get underway on Friday night when Edwardsville meets Alton at Public School Stadium in a 7 p.m. kickoff in a week one game that will be livestreamed on Rivberbender.com.

To view the livestream on Riverbender.com and Edglentoday.com Friday night, click below:

<http://www.riverbender.com/video/live/details.cfm?id=1200>

Attendance will be limited, and only those who have a ticket to the game will be admitted to the stadium.

Both teams haven't played since 2019, with the season being delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and finally moved to the spring by the IHSA in a six-week period. As might be expected, the Tigers are raring to go and have worked hard to get ready for this day.

"Everything's good," said Edwardsville head coach Matt Martin. "The kids are working hard, and we're committed. That's what we're looking for."

Martin is very happy with the how his players have stuck with their commitment, even with all of the uncertainty of whether the season would be played or not.

"If you look at the process, they practiced all summer, not sure what the fall would be like, then you had fall contact days," he said. "So we had contact days, then lifting until Edwardsville shut down. Then we had more contact days in February, and the season officially started March 3, with the first game March 19."

The Tigers will have senior running back Justin Johnson, Jr., who signed with West Virginia this past winter, and he, along with the other seniors, will provide valuable leadership to the team.

"We're happy to have Justin," Martin said. "He's one of our best players, and he's a senior with experience, and one of our senior leaders."

Although it's going to be a six-game season, Martin knows his team will be ready to go when the whistle blows.

"I think if you're a competitor, no matter how many games there are, the kids are ready to compete, and go out and win," Martin said.

The keys to the Tigers winning will be the standard Edwardsville recipe for success.

"Play physical, win the turnover battle, great execution and effort," Martin said.

Martin is also uncertain of what will happen, and knows that the Redbirds are a good team as well.

"Sure, we want to be in position," Martin said, "but our first game is Alton, and we want to have great execution and effort. They were a good team last year, but we don't know where they are, and we won't know where they are until we play a game."

Still, it's football, and both coaches are looking forward to getting back into the groove.

For Martin's part, it'll be a return to a sense of normalcy, which is very badly needed.

"There's been so many things we couldn't control," Martin said, "and it's nice to have a sense of normalcy back."