

Edwardsville Rallies From 3-0 Down To Tie Granite City In Final Seconds, Then Wins Shootout For First MVCHA Title Since 2016

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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EAST ALTON - Trailing 3-0 in the second period, Edwardsville's hockey team rallied to tie the score on a goal from Tommy Papa with 10 seconds left in regulation, then won

a shootout 3-1 to take a 4-3 win over Granite City to win its first Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association championship since 2016, sweeping the Warriors 2-0 in a best-of-three series at the East Alton Ice Arena.

The Tigers also defeated the Warriors in game one 4-1, ending Granite's 27-game winning streak. It was Edwardsville's first title since their five-year run as Class 2A champions before leaving the MVCHA for the Mid-States Club Hockey Association in St. Louis. The Tigers returned to the MVCHA this season because of restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and plan on returning to the MSCHA for the 2021-22 season.

It was a very successful season for the team, and for sure a season unlike any other, given the COVID-19 Pandemic circumstances.

"It sure was," said Edwardsville head coach Jason Walker. "It was like a time of a million different games, but the end was gold."

The Warriors jumped out to a 3-0 lead on goals from Simon Maxfield, Trevor Harrison and Nathan Niles-Smith, but were able to rally back to gain the tie and force the shootout.

"We got off to a slow start, and we couldn't capitalize on our power plays, and Granite did," Walker said, "and that was the difference at the start. The guys kept plugging away, and we found a way."

The Tigers got goals from Anthony Ruklic and Aiden Stevens to cut the lead to 3-2, then got a power play goal from Papa with 10 seconds left in regulation. In the shootout, Ruklic, Fred Bramstedt and Cam Gillen scored in the shootout, while Maxfield scored for the Warriors.

The game was played in an electric atmosphere, with a packed house watching the proceedings. And that helped Walker enjoy the championship even more.

"It was good," Walker said. "It was a throwback type of atmosphere for Granite and Edwardsville, and it was a lot of fun."

The Tigers finished the season 9-0-0, while the Warriors finished 7-2-0, and Walker was very complimentary of his players who stuck with everything when it looked very doubtful that the season would be played.

"It was great for the kids to get an opportunity to play," Walker said, "when it looked like we might not get one, and the way it ended is something special for all the guys."



[Colin Feeney also contributed to this story.](#)