

East St. Louis Goes On 25-11 Run In Third Quarter, Blows Open Game In 66-35 Win Over Marion In IHSA Class 3A Sectional

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HIGHLAND - East St. Louis outscored Marion 25-11 in the third quarter of their IHSA boys basketball Class 3A sectional semifinal game against Marion Wednesday night, and it was more than enough to send the Flyers past the Wildcats 66-35 at the Highland High School gym.

East Side was able to overcome an early 17-14 first quarter deficit in which Marion opened the game with five three-pointers, taking charge in the second quarter and putting things away in the third to advance to Friday night's final.

The Wildcats opened the game with their three-point attack, as Cooper Thompson, Trevor Jackson and Jackson Connor all hit behind the arc to help give Marion a 15-8 lead. The Flyers stayed steady, with Christian Jones and Macaeleb Rich helping keep the game close at 15-11, with Mackenly Falconer hitting a three before the buzzer to cut the Marion lead to 17-14 after the first quarter.

East Side began to assert control in the second quarter by starting off on a 5-0 run, as a Rich dunk and a three from Jaden Hale gave the Flyers a 19-17 lead. Baskets from Daveon Hawkins, Rich and Hale, along with a three from Hale, gave the Flyers a 28-17 lead at halftime, shutting out the Wildcats in the second quarter.

The run continued in the third quarter as Hale hit another three before Evan Noelle broke the Wildcat drought with a basket to make it 31-19 early on. The Flyers then scored 10 unanswered points behind a three-point play from Jones to go along with a three from Falconer, a basket from Hale and two free throws from Jones to make it 41-19 before the Wildcats scored again on a nice spin move from Venson Newsome to make it 41-21. East Side outscored Marion 12-7 the rest of the period to take a 53-28 lead after the third quarter.

The Flyers continued to dominate, opening the fourth with a 7-2 run to take a 60-30 lead and kick in the running clock rule. Both teams then cleared the benches as East Side went on to its 66-35 win over Marion to move on to the sectional final.

That final will be played on Friday against Chatham Glenwood, who defeated Centralia 42-39 on Tuesday night, at the Highland gym with a 7 p.m. start. The Flyers are now 26-5 on the year, while the Wildcats finish the season 17-14.

In another sectional semifinal game played on Wednesday, in the Class 1A sectional at White Hall North Greene, Jacksonville Routt Catholic defeated Metro-East Lutheran 37-34 in double overtime. The Rockets advance to play Liberty, a 44-41 winner over Waterloo Gibault Catholic in Tuesday's first semifinal, in the final Friday night, also starting at 7 p.m. The Knights end the season 16-11.