

# Jerseyville loses playoff hockey match to East Alton-Wood River

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**EAST ALTON** – Stellar goaltending can often make the difference in a hockey game, especially in the postseason. Tales abound about how a hot goalie can take a team a long way.

Jerseyville had such a goalie in the opening game of their Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association Class 1A West Division semifinal series against regular-season champ East Alton-Wood River Tuesday night as Gage Wendel, who faced 41 shots, stopped the Oilers time and again, sometimes in spectacular fashion.

But the Oilers finally took control in the third period and handed the Panthers a 4-0 defeat to take a 1-0 lead in the best-of-three series at East Alton Ice Arena. Game 2 of the series is set for 7:15 p.m. Thursday, with a deciding game set for 8:45 p.m. Monday if necessary. The winner will get Bethalto, who swept out Alton Marquette, in the West final.

“Our goalie just stood on his head tonight,” said Jerseyville coach John Criswell. “We were running a short bench tonight (the Panthers had just eight skaters available for the game) and we were double-shifting most of the time. We got tired there, but we just sucked it up and played great.”

EA-WR coach John Helmkamp agreed. “They played hard and played great,” Helmkamp said. “There were times that, when we were ahead 1-0 and couldn't get a shot past him, we could have gotten frustrated. We showed some character and didn't give up.

“It was a great effort by them tonight.”

Helmkamp praised his own side's effort as well. “Our goalie (Blake Stone) played great as well,” Helmkamp said. “It was just a battle out there tonight.”

The Oilers had a big goal early, scoring short-handed when, with Blake Weishaupt off for hooking, Alec Revelle skated in and beat Wendle on a scramble in front at 5:34 to gave EA-WR a 1-0 lead. It stayed that way for quite a long time, though; Revelle was equal to the task a number of times, turning back the Oilers, sometimes in spectacular fashion.

The most telling sequence came in the third period when, playing with a two-man advantage, the Oilers couldn't convert. But on a power play with the Panthers' Joe Watson off for interference, Brandon Bailey got a pass from Weishaupt and finally scored on Wendel at 6:35 to make it 2-0.

It soon became 3-0 when Tyler McHatton knocked home a rebound at 9:06 of the period, and Cole Ford closed out the scoring on a short-handed empty-net goal with 1:27 to go.

Wendel had 37 saves for the Panthers, while Stone stopped all 17 shots he faced for the Oilers.