

Edwardsville comes out on fire; tops Alton 8-1 in playoff opener

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EAST ALTON – Edwardsville’s hockey team had a two-and-a-half week layoff, but came out firing Tuesday night with five unanswered first-period goals to defeat Alton 8-1 in the opening game of a best-of-three playoff game.

The Edwardsville-Alton game was the first in a best-of-three Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association Class 2A North Division Final series at East Alton Ice Arena. Edwardsville scored three goals in 47 seconds in the first period.

Game 2 of the set is scheduled for 8:45 p.m. Thursday at East Alton, with a deciding game to take place at 7:15 p.m. Monday if needed. The win was unbeaten Edwardsville's 19th of the season; the Tigers went 18-0-0 in the regular season to earn a first-round bye of the playoffs.

“For not playing for a couple of weeks, we were ready,” said Tiger coach Jason Walker. “We kept at it for the full 39 minutes, though there were a couple of lulls in the second period. But we got it back quickly.

“We had a huge start, and that really made a difference. We have a good core of seniors on the team and they wanted to keep things going.”

It took only took the Tigers 34 seconds to find the back of the net, Tyler Hinterser taking a pass from Tyler Schaffer and scoring past Redbird goalie Tyler St. Peters to give EHS a quick 1-0 lead. Just over three minutes later, Jake Aurelio got a feed from Carson Lewis and beat St. Peters to extend the lead 2-0.

Then came the 47-second sequence that ended the competitive phase of the game and got St. Peters pulled; it started when Hinterser got close to St. Peters after passes from Schaffer and Shaun Raftery and scored at 8:43 to make it 3-0 for Edwardsville. Then, just 26 seconds later, Hinterser got feeds from Schaffer and Cole Siefert and beat St. Peters between the legs to make it 4-0.

Alton coach Abram Henson pulled St. Peters after that and inserted Mitch Klug, but it made no difference to the Tigers; Lewis took just 21 seconds to solve Klug, with an assist from Aurelio, to put the Tigers ahead 5-0, prompting Henson to call time out to settle his troops.

“They came out hard at us,” Henson said, “and it wasn't quite there for us tonight (the Redbirds were coming off a 5-2 series-clinching win over Collinsville the night before). It's hard to come back from 5-0 down after the first period; it really hurt us.”

Things settled down after that first frantic 13 minutes, but Edwardsville extended the lead to 6-0 when, with Ben Drake of Alton off for unsportsmanlike conduct, Brendan Raftery fired one past Klug at the 3:27 mark, with brother Shawn and Hinterser getting the assists. The Redbirds got one back at 8:21 when Alec Rubin, with help from Drake and Brendan Lowe, scored past Tiger goalie Brady Griffin, but Schaeffer scored twice (both times from Shaun Raftery, with a second assist on the second goal going to Rory Margherio) to send the Tiger faithful home happy.

Edwardsville outshot Alton 28-15, with Griffin making 14 saves. St. Peters had four saves for Alton and Klug 16 saves.

The Redbirds found themselves in a similar situation against Collinsville, having to sweep the last two games to advance. This time, however, the stakes are much higher.

“It's the same situation as we had with Collinsville,” Henson said. “It's do-or-die.”

“We know they'll come out with their backs to the wall,” Walker said. “They know what's at stake. We'll have to be ready.”



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)