

Edwardsville beats East Alton-Wood River in hockey game

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EAST ALTON – The best way to win a hockey game? It's easy.

Stay out of the penalty box.

Example: The Edwardsville 1A hockey team, which took advantage of numerous East Alton-Wood River penalties and scored three times on the power play in a 5-0 whitewash over the Oilers in Game 1 of the Mississippi Valley Club Hockey Association Class 1A Final Tuesday night at East Alton Ice Arena.

The Tigers, like their Class 2A counterparts, took a 1-0 series lead in the best-of-three and can wrap up their title in Game 2, which starts at 7:15 p.m. Thursday at East Alton. A deciding game of the series would be played at 8:45 p.m. Monday, also at East Alton, if necessary.

“Penalties killed us,” said Oiler coach John Helmkamp. “They had a few five-on-threes against us and took advantage of it. We've got to be more disciplined than that. I didn't have to say much to the kids after the game; we knew what had happened.”

“We had a total team effort tonight,” said Tiger coach Jason Walker, pulling double duty with his Class 2A and 1A teams both in the finals. “We played pretty well, stayed out of the box and played a good quality game. It's the kind of game we need to play to be successful.”

Seeing the success of their Class 2A counterparts has inspired the Class 1A Tigers to reach their final and the chance to have a sweep of both crowns. “They've got a chance now,” Walker said.

After a quiet first period, things started heating up just 28 seconds into the second, when Reilly Patton got the first goal of the game on an assist from Christian Blandina. The Tigers took a 2-0 lead at 7:03 of the frame when Trevor Henson, with help from Lucas Tucker and Blandina, beat Oiler goalie Blake Stone to make it 2-0, then expanded the lead to 3-0 when, with EAWR's Blake Weishaupt off for interference, Blandina took a pass from Henson and knocked in a shot past Stone at 8:31, with Tucker also getting an assist on the play.

It took just 14 seconds into the third period to make it 4-0 in Edwardsville's favor when Blandina scored again on the power play, with Tucker and Henson earning assists. A series of penalties against both teams then left either the Oilers or the Tigers on the power play for most of the third period, with the Tigers capitalizing on a two-man advantage in the late going when Connor Stewart got the final goal, with Jacob Foley and Tucker getting assists, at 11:26.

The number of penalties were reflected on power-play chances; the Tigers went 3-for-10 on the PP, while EAWR went 0-for-3 on their power play chances. Edwardsville outshot EAWR 26-20, with Matthew Griffin getting the shutout; Stone

