

Early Goal Is Enough For Edwardsville Boys Soccer, Hang On To Beat Rival Redbirds

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – After a hard-fought game against Collinsville, one that EHS lost by a score of 2-1, the Tigers had a day to regroup and prepare for yet another grueling Southwestern Conference matchup. This time they'd take on the Alton Redbirds.

Alton, now 4-8 on the season, has been playing some good soccer, just not quite getting the results. They currently sit 1-6 in the conference, but half of those losses were one-goal thrillers against O'Fallon, Belleville East, and on Thursday night, Edwardsville. They are currently on a six-game skid.

As for the Tigers, this win moves them up to 10-4-1 on the season and 4-3 in the SWC.

Thursday night's game, played mostly under the lights at Alton's Piasa Motor Fuels Field, was yet another example of how challenging the Southwestern Conference can be.

"It's tough to give up every single game in this conference. It's just day after day after day that we've battled our hearts out," Alton head coach Tyler Hamilton said.

When two of these teams meet up, anything can and most likely will happen.

It only took one goal to separate the two teams and it came in the fifth minute. Junior forward Evan Moore ran on to a through ball from the midfield. As he sprinted onto the ball, Alton's goalkeeper, senior Aiden Belchik, came out of the goal to challenge, but Moore took a touch around him and slotted the ball into an empty net. It went on to be the game-winner, his first of the season and third goal overall.

EHS controlled most of the possession in the first half with Alton having some counterattacks here and there, but never had a real good look in the first 40 minutes.

Coming out of the halftime break Alton looked like a new team, a team on a mission. They had multiple good chances in the early going of the second period of play.

Sophomore forward Dillan Cowan delivered a quality shot from about 25 yards out in the 55th minute forcing Tigers' goalkeeper, junior Zeke Manning, to make his best save of the game.

EHS returned the favor about 10 minutes later, but this time Belchik made a miraculous save.

As the game went on, it got more and more physical, as would any game between two rivals. It saw some fouls, some pushing and shoving and a few yellow cards for both teams.

Both teams getting frustrated down the stretch, but Alton still managed to have their best opportunity of the entire game. After the ball bounced around inside the 18-yard box, senior forward Ashton Schepers ran onto the ball, not striking it the best, but getting enough of it to force another great save from Manning.

The Redbirds had their final chance in the 86th minute from a corner kick but couldn't figure out a way to get one on the board.

Despite the loss, coach Hamilton wasn't displeased with his team's performance. He agreed that people are underestimating the Redbirds and that they are "becoming that team that no one wants to play" due to the fact of the team's high work rate and never-give-up mentality.

Tigers' head coach Mark Heiderscheid was happy to get back in the win column after the heartbreaking loss to Collinsville Tuesday night.

Edwardsville will be back in action on Saturday, at home against Normal Community. The non-conference game starts at 11 a.m.

As for Alton, they don't play again until Monday. They'll take on Alton Marquette in a much-anticipated rivalry game at 6:30 p.m. from Public School Stadium.