

# **Loyola Academy Scores On All Five First Half Possessions, Takes 49-21 Win Over Tigers In IHSA 8A Second Round Football Playoff Game**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Senior Jake Stearney set the tone with a 74-yard run on the first play from scrimmage and from there, Wilmette Loyola Academy scored on all five of its first-half possessions in building a 35-0 halftime lead in going on to a 49-21 win over Edwardsville in a second round game in the IHSA Class 8A football playoffs Saturday afternoon at Tiger Stadium.

The Ramblers' offensive line helped out in setting the tone, using their size advantage to great effect against the Tigers in jumping out to their early lead. Edwardsville never gave up and kept plugging, being able to execute its offense better and score three times in the second half.

"Yeah, they did," said Edwardsville head coach Matt Martin. "I think he's (Loyola head coach John Holecek) is selling it short, His one-to-three tight ends he can put on the field at the time. They dominated the line of scrimmage, which caused us problems. Congratulations to them. John, he's a class act and I wish him the best throughout the playoffs."

It was a very tough day offensively in the first half for the Tigers, who couldn't get anything going, but were able to execute better in the second half.

"You know what I told our guys at halftime? I said 'Listen, they are who we thought they were,' " Martin said, "I go 'I knew we had to play a really good game and maybe get some breaks to beat them.' I was disappointed, we weren't executing very well and that was frustrating. I thought we executed a little bit better in the second half, but they're pretty good. You've got to give them credit."

It was still a very good season for Edwardsville, starting off with their incredible 41-34 double overtime win at Jackson, Mo., that broke a long-standing home winning streak for the Indians, with the Tigers going on to end the season 7-4 and defeating O'Fallon in the opening round of the playoffs last week on the road before playing against the Ramblers.

"Yeah, you know, that's 8A football right there," Martin said. "You can get a giant right off the bat. We did. They're going to cause a few more sad eyes throughout this process."

The graduating seniors who played their final game in an Edwardsville uniform will be leaving a very positive legacy on the program.

"I was grateful for them," Martin said. "I thought we kind of took a dip there. I think they're raising the bar for us. I think we can continue to grow and I think the senior class are getting us back in the right direction."

The Ramblers' defense was just as dominant, limiting the Tigers' offense with a pair of fourth down stops and not allowing Edwardsville any chance to gain traction.

"A couple of fourth down stops, I believe," Holecek said. "I thought we had a good game plan and we executed. Obviously, the wind had a lot to do with the errant passes; it wasn't good on either side. But certainly, they had to pass it a little more, which, obviously, plays in our hands."

Stearney's 74-yard run down the far sideline on the opening play set the tone for the game, and the Ramblers scored two plays later on a three-yard run by Johnny McGuire gave Loyola a 7-0 lead after the conversion. On the second possession, Foster took a hand-off and raced 30 yards down the right side for a touchdown that made it 14-0 after Charlie Skelly's conversion.

Loyola's next possession was a 10-play, 77-yard march down the field with Foster carrying much of the load with good runs throughout, climaxing the drive with a 10-yard run up the middle for the touchdown that made it 21-0 after the conversion early in



the second quarter. The Ramblers increased their lead to 28-0 later in the second on a four-yard pass play from Stearney to Declan Forde for the touchdown, then made it 35- at halftime on a Foster one-yard run up the middle for the score.

The Tigers got on the board in the third quarter as De'Shawn Larson got off some good runs and quarterback Jake Curry connected with Joey DeMare on a pair of key passes to keep the drive going. It climaxed with a one-yard touchdown pass to Kellen Brnfre to cut the lead to 35-7 after Tyler Dacus' conversion.

The Ramblers came right back with a 48-yard touchdown run from Melvin Poku to make the score 42-7 and in the fourth quarter, Jordan Bush went ran in from eight yards out on the left side to make the score 42-14. Loyola got its last touchdown on a 14-yard pass play from Luke Collins to Corey Larson to make it 49-14 and in the final minute, Curry hit DeMare from four yards out to make the final score 49-21 for the Ramblers.

The Tigers end their season 7-4, while the Ramblers are now 10-1 and will play a quarterfinal game against LaGrange Lyons, a 24-13 winner over Plainfield North in a game played Friday night. The site, date and time for the game will be announced at the IHSA office Monday afternoon.



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