

# Oilers Top Shells Twice In Regular Season, But Roxana Wins The One That Matters In Regional Quarterfinals

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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WOOD RIVER – The Oilers won the two regular-season meetings with the Shells by scores of 52-48 and 48-43, but it was Roxana who won the game that mattered most.

The cross-town rivals met for a third time at Wood River in the Class 3A Regional Quarterfinals Saturday afternoon. It was Roxana who narrowly came out on top by a score of 45-44.

“This was a big one for us,” Roxana head coach Mark Briggs said. “We lost twice to them, and we knew coming in here how special it was.”

The Shells now move on to the Regional Semis where they’ll take on No. 4-seeded Piasa Southwestern (16-15) on Wednesday, Feb. 22 at 7:30 p.m. at EAWR High School.

The game Saturday was back and forth the entire way with numerous lead changes down the stretch.

After a three-and-a-half-minute drought to start the game, Roxana finally broke the deadlock when Chris Walleck made a three. Wood River’s Devon Green scored a couple of baskets to tie the game at five. Roxana went back ahead before Lucas Moore’s three tied the game back at eight.

The teams continued going at it, but it was Roxana who led 12-10 after the first quarter.

The Shells went on a little run to start the second. They pushed out to a 17-12 lead before Tyler Robinson made a three to cut the lead down to 19-15.

Thanks to a couple of Green baskets and another Robinson three, the Oilers came back to tie the game up at 25 heading into the locker rooms.

Roxana’s Ashton Noble opened the second half scoring with a layup before Green went back-to-back again to take the lead right back at 29-27.

The Oilers went on a run to grow the lead to 36-30 after Seth Slayden made both of his free throws.

Walleck made a three to cut the lead down, Evan Wells picked up a steal and a layup, and Jackson Garman made a layup to go on a quick 7-0 run. After all that the Shells were up 37-36 after three quarters.

Wood River’s Jakob Gerber started the fourth with a layup to regain the lead at 38-37 before the game became riddled with fouls.

After some questionable charge calls went against the Oilers, Slayden, the team’s leading scorer this season, fouled out with 5:37 left in the game.

“He’s a leader. He’s their glue and heart and soul,” Briggs said about Slayden.

“I would say this. He’s one of the best players in the area and if he’s in the game at the end, we win the game,” Wood River head coach Kevin Gockel said about Slayden. “He just has that ‘something’ that you just can’t teach in an athlete, that intangible of just finding ways to win, and I know he would’ve won the game for us.”

Without Slayden in the game, the Shells went on a 5-0 run to regain the lead at 43-38 thanks to a Walleck basket, two good free throws from Sean Maberry, and another Garman layup.

Robinson scored a quick three with 1:27 remaining in the game to make it 43-41. Roxana’s Aidan Briggs went to the line shooting one-and-one but missed, giving the ball back to the Oilers.

They went the other way and took a 44-43 lead after Moore drained a corner three.

“I really thought when Lucas Moore scored that three-pointer in the corner, I really thought we had it,” Gockel said.

Roxana inbounded the ball and got fouled, sending Briggs back to the line shooting two. He made both to regain the lead at 45-44 with less than 10 seconds remaining in the game.

“We took a bunch of charges, I think five in total, my kid took three against Slayden,” coach Briggs said. “Aidan Briggs stepped up today and not only made a couple of big free throws for us, but the charges were huge.”

Wood River inbounded and got their second play option off, but the shot fell short at the buzzer.

Green led all scorers with 16 points while Robinson had 13 for the Oilers. Moore had eight, Slayden had five, and Gerber had two.

As for the Shells, they were led by Walleck’s 12 points. Maberry had 10, Briggs had nine, Garman had six, and Noble and Wells each had four.

“I felt like this game here, we did a great job executing,” Briggs said. “I’m proud of our kids for how well they prepared for this.”

“It was a great game, great atmosphere, and we needed this. We’ve got Southwestern on Wednesday, we’ll get ready for them now,” coach Briggs said.

The Shells beat Southwestern twice earlier on in the regular season by scores of 50-32 back on Nov. 26 and 37-26 on Dec. 2.