

Tigers Rally In Each Set But Fall To Maroons In Regional Final

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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ALTON – Since the pandemic, the Edwardsville Tigers’ volleyball team has become accustomed to postseason success.

So, after a two-set loss to the Belleville West Maroons Thursday night in the Alton regional final, the exit seemed a bit early for the Tigers’ standards.

Last year, Edwardsville defeated Belleville West in the regional final before going out to O'Fallon in the sectional semifinals. The year before that the Tigers finished fourth at the state tournament.

This year, the Maroons got their revenge when it mattered most.

Edwardsville won both meetings in the regular season in three sets at Belleville West on Sept. 21 and then in straight sets on the Tigers' senior night on Oct. 19 to close out the regular season.

Belleville West returned the favor Thursday night with a close, two-set win.

The story of set one was a nine-point run from the Maroons. The Tigers watched a 7-4 lead turn into a 16-8 deficit very quickly. West kept on going and led 19-12 before the Tigers started to chip away.

After an emphatic ace from freshman Madelyn Ohlau, the Tigers rallied back and would tie the set at 21 before taking a 23-22 lead. The Maroons scored three straight points to take the first set 25-23.

The Tigers got off to a 3-2 lead in set number two, but the Maroons used a six-point run to jump out to an 8-3 lead. From there, Belleville West didn't trail again.

The Tigers managed to tie the frame up at 13, but the Maroons kept regaining control. The gap was no bigger than three points the rest of the way, but the Tigers never got into any sort of rhythm, falling in the second set 25-21.

"They just showed up," Edwardsville head coach Heather Ohlau said about the Maroons. "Belleville West showed up with a game plan, they executed a little bit better. It was unfortunately a bad day to have a bad day. We didn't play like we should have. West earned that win today. They played a lot cleaner."

West played a lot cleaner defensively, the Tigers just had a bad blocking day according to coach Ohlau.

"Our block wasn't on today," she said. "Their hitters were able to use our block a little bit more than they have in the past and we weren't able to change like we wanted to."

The Tigers came up with eight blocks total.

Senior Sydney Davis led the team with 11 kills while junior Addie Reader and Madelyn Ohlau each had four. Ohlau also had an ace while senior Hanna Matarelli had four as well as a team-high 15 digs. Senior Megan Knobloch had 10 digs while Sydney Davis had nine.

Had it not been for West's impressive run in set one, this match would have been a whole lot different, but that's the way it went for the Tigers.

"We dug ourselves a hole; unfortunately it was too late to try to dig out," coach Ohlau said.

"When you dig yourself a hole that much, I think losing by two, we count that as a win, but unfortunately on the scoreboard it doesn't count as a win," she continued.

"That's something that we've been battling all year, not getting in as deep as a hole. But, in a regional championship game against a talented Belleville West, you can't do that."

Edwardsville's season comes to a close at 24-12.