

Melion Scores Three Times, Winton Hits Mailander Twice For Scores, Elmhurst York Holds Off Late Edwardsville Rally

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ELMHURST - Workhorse running back Jake Melion scored three touchdowns, while quarterback Sean Winton hit Luke Mailander twice more for touchdowns as Elmhurst York scored 29 unanswered points after trailing 21-7, then held off a late Edwardsville rally to win their IHSA Class 8A quarterfinal playoff football game 36-29 at Clarence D. East Field at York High School.

It was a very hard-fought game, in which the Tigers held a 21-7 lead, and although being down 36-21 in the fourth, Edwardsville never gave up and very nearly tied the game in the final minute before falling.

Things started off well for the Tigers, with Patrick Chism getting good runs, also aided by a pass interference penalty. The drive stalled out, and two passes to Chism fell incomplete, giving the ball over to the Dukes.

York took full advantage, going 81 yards in 10 plays, with Melion carrying most of the load. Mellon went the final five yards up the middle for the opening touchdown with 4:49 left in the first quarter to give the Dukes a 7-0 lead.

Edwardsville took the next possession and went 72 yards in seven plays, climaxing with a 19-yard pass from Curry to Gavyn Yates for the touchdown to tie the score 7-7 at the end of the first quarter. Early in the second quarter, Kaylon Bursey went four yards up the middle for the touchdown that gave the Tigers the lead at 14-7 after the conversion.

On York's next possession, on third and nine on the Dukes' 33, Jaiden Vonner intercepted a Winton pass and took it back 33 yards for a touchdown to make the score 21-7 for the Tigers.

The Dukes rallied back on the next possession, going 78 yards on 16 plays with Melion finishing the drive with a two-yard run with 7:07 left in the half to cut the Edwardsville lead to 21-14.

After stopping the Tigers on their next possession, York got the ball back with 1:30 left and went 77 yards in four plays, taking only 50 seconds as Winton hit Mailander with a 29-yard pass down the York sidelines for the tying touchdown to make it 21-21 at halftime after the conversion.

The Dukes took the first possession of the second half and went 65 yards in 11 plays, keeping the ball for nearly the first half of the third quarter. The drive ended with Winton hitching up with Mailander from 35 yards out to give the Dukes the lead back at 27-21, the conversion kick being blocked with 6:08 left in the period.

York then recovered an Edwardsville fumble at the Tiger 30, which turned out to be a critical play in the game. The Dukes then started a drive, but a strong Tigers defense stalled the drive out, with Cole Ostendorf kicking a 35-yard field goal with 2:48 left to extend the York lead to 30-21.

Edwardsville then went three-and-out on the next possession, with the Dukes taking over at their own 34, then marched 66 yards in 10 plays, taking 4:44 off the clock, with Melion going the final 11 yards in three plays to score what turned out to be a crucial touchdown with 8:38 left in regulation to up the Dukes' lead to 36-21.

The Tigers got the ball with 6:02 left following a York three-and-out and immediately scored on a 42-yard pass from Curry to Jack Weaver with 5:57 left to cut the York lead to 36-29 after a two-point pass was complete in the end zone following a York penalty. The Tiger defense rose again to stop the Dukes and Edwardsville got the ball back with 3:44 left.

On fourth-and-10 at the Tiger 22, Curry hit Zach Williams on the sidelines for a critical first down at the Edwardsville 31, then on the next play, found Bursey for 16 yards and another first down at the Tiger 47.

Eventually, the ball got to the York 15, with Curry throwing well and hitting crucial completions. On fourth-and-16 at the Dukes 21, a pass from Curry to Bursey fell just incomplete with 27 seconds left, giving the ball to the Dukes, who were able to run out the clock, gain the win, and advance to next week's semifinals.

The Tigers' successful season under first-year head coach Kelsey Pickering ended at 10-2, while the Dukes are now 11-1 and move on to the semifinals, where they will play at top-seeded Wilmette Loyola Academy, who defeated Chicago St. Ignatius College Prep Catholic 41-7, next weekend.

