

# Edwardsville trio Smith, Epenesa, Stephen already showing dominance in first three games

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**Oliver Stephen, A.J. Epenesa and Mark Smith** are key returnees from last year's Edwardsville boys basketball team and only three games into the season they are showing they have picked up where they left off last year.

The trio were all keys to **Edwardsville's 73-41 win over Waterloo** on Friday in the Battling Bulldogs Tourney.

**Stephen netted an amazing 10 three-point shots** from different parts of the court and ended up with 31 points. The 10 three-pointers was considered one of the most ever in one game individually for the Tigers, although the exact record wasn't known Friday night.

**Epenesa had 11 points** and was even more important under the basket with **10 rebounds** and several passes to the outside from under the basket. **Smith** handled the start of many of Edwardsville's key plays in the contest and tossed in **14 points**. Edwardsville coach Mike Waldo gave credit for Smith for being a catalyst in the victory with his point play directing the offensive attack.

Stephen is a consummate team player and gave his teammates much credit for his three-point success in the game.

“I have to give my teammates a lot of shout outs for screening and passing. I wouldn’t have been able to do what I did without that,” he said. “I practice the shots I took a lot from three-point range.”

Epenesa is working himself back into basketball shape after a long football season and continues to make progress on the court. He is known for his ability to leap around the basket and he had a terrific **slam dunk** after a perfect pass from Stephen in the game.

“Oliver had a nice pass setting me up,” Epenesa said about the dunk. “Coach Mike Waldo always says pass it like you are shooting it when we are trying to slam it.”

Coach Waldo is constantly working with Epenesa in regard to offensive and defensive rebounds and their importance and passing from those locations. It showed in this contest as Epenesa was clearly the dominating factor both on the offensive and defensive side under the basket. He also dished out several passes to Stephen and other Tigers on the front line.

We work on setting me up to get as many rebounds as we can on defense,” Epenesa said. “I think the Carbondale game is one we should have won and this was a real confidence booster.”

Stephen said after the first couple minutes the Tigers got into the flow of the game and took over from there, setting Edwardsville up for the final match of the tourney at 5 p.m. today. With a win, Edwardsville would end the tourney with a 3-1 mark heading into play next week.

