

Lombardi has 32 assists, Edwardsville clicks in full gear at times despite volleyball loss to Belleville West

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Southwestern Conference rivals **Edwardsville** and **Belleville West** have met five times so far this boys volleyball season.

The Maroons have defeated the Tigers three of those five encounters this year, including a sweep in the SWC; West scored that third win Tuesday evening at Lincoln Middle School's gym, the Tigers scoring a 25-20 win in the opener but West winning the final two games 28-26 and 25-16 to take their record to 20-14-1 overall, 9-3 in the league. Edwardsville fell to 18-13 overall, 7-5 in the SWC.

“We had our moments; we were moving, we were clicking,” said **Tiger coach Andy Bersett**. “Even though we didn't end that well in the first game, for the most part, we played well. In the second game, we're right there; we're battling, we got down, we came back – we probably showed a lot coming back, especially Nick Allen being put in some tough spots going back there and serving.

“That's what you want to see. Unfortunately, we couldn't finish the deal.”

“I think overall, we were less consistent and we kind of lost focus on what we were doing,” said the Tigers' junior setter Ben Lombardi. “Especially the second game; we just assumed we were going to win. We won the first game, especially by a decent amount, so we weren't prepared to play our hardest to win the next one.”

“We just need to bring more energy and just play better all around,” Allen said. “That's the biggest thing that we need to focus on (the energy and consistency the Tigers need).”

Edwardsville got out to a good start in the opener, taking a comfortable lead before the Maroons came close before the Tigers closed things out. Edwardsville got out to a 2-0 lead in Game 2 but the lead seesawed back and forth throughout the game; neither team could get out to good lead, the lead never being more than two points before West got on a run to get to 12-9 and 13-10 leads.

Edwardsville rallied back to take a 15-14 lead in the game before the two teams traded leads back and forth before West reached game point at 24-22. The Tigers managed to tie things up at 24-24 to extend the game and had match point a couple of times, but couldn't put away the Maroons. West battled to tie things at 26-26 before scoring the final two points on a kill and a Tiger violation to force a deciding game.

West got out to as much as 8-4 lead early in Game 3, then got on a big run to extend the game to 14-6 to put Edwardsville on the ropes. The Tigers rallied back to get to 15-11, but couldn't get much closer and West got out to a 21-12 lead before closing things out with one last four-point run.

Lombardi had 32 assists for the Tigers; Allen had 15 kills, with Mike Horton having nine and Tommy Hartnagel eight. Bob Dresner had 16 digs and Hartnagel 14.

Next up for Edwardsville is the IHSA Metro East Lutheran Regional, where the Tigers will meet the Knights at Hooks Gym at 6:30 p.m. May 24; the final is set for May 25, where the Tigers and Maroons could meet for a sixth time.

