

Epenesa, Smith combine for 37 first-half points, Tigers dominate Warriors 76-43

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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GRANITE CITY – Edwardsville got on a roll in Thursday night's Southwestern Conference boys basketball game against Granite City.

Once the Tigers started on that roll, it was hard to stop them.

Edwardsville outscored the Warriors 32-0 in a second quarter that saw them go into the locker room up 55-11 en route to a 76-43 win at Memorial Gym that saw the Tigers go to 7-1 overall, 3-1 in the SWC. GCHS dropped to 0-9 overall, 0-5 in the league.

“We did a lot of things good tonight,” said **Tiger coach Mike Waldo**. “I thought Oliver Stephen had a great game defensively. They came out and made a couple of threes early and we had to change our defense and I thought Oliver did a great job defensively for us. I thought we executed a lot of things good on offense too.

“The mode of defense they played, they weren't going to let Oliver shoot (Stephen did not score in the game), but there was a lot of things open because of that. Our guys did a good job of finding those things; to Oliver's credit, he kept screening, just kept playing. I thought our guys did a good job of taking what the defense gave us.”



A.J. Epenesa took full advantage, scoring 20 first-half points while **Mark Smith** had 17 and Jack Marinko 11 before the and the other Tiger regulars sat down in the second half.

Warrior coach Raffi Karibian was philosophic about the game. “We knew going in that it was going to be difficult,” Karibian said. “I felt in the first quarter, when it was

22-11, that we mad a couple of simple mistakes and we could have them held to 15 or 16; we just have to go to practice tomorrow and keep our heads up, keep playing hard and keep getting better.”

Karibian encouraged his players during a second-quarter time out when Edwardsville was extending their lead. “Just keep playing hard, win it one possession at a time,” Karibian said, “just elevate the scoreboard and keep chipping away.”

Edwardsville was well-prepared for Thursday's contest. “Our guys have practiced well,” Waldo said. “We've done a good of practicing and we've got guys who like to play, like to work and we've practiced well, so I wasn't concerned that we wouldn't play well.”

Edwardsville's bench players came into the game in the second half and picked up where the starters left off; **Zach Doornink** had 12 second-half points to lead the way; **Nathan Kolesa** added seven points for Edwardsville, as did Caleb Strohmeier. The Warriors were led by Zidane Moore's 12 points, with Kendrick Williba adding seven points and Austin Bonvicino and Jacob Spears six each.

The Tigers won the JV curtain-raising game 43-36 over the Warriors.

Both teams head into next week's Prairie Farms-Collinsville Holiday Classic tournament at Collinsville's Fletcher Gym; the Tigers take on McCluer North at 1 p.m. Wednesday and the Warriors close out the tournament's opening day at 9:30 p.m. Wednesday against Quincy; the tournament runs through Dec. 30.

