

Edwardsville boys basketball team stays close to home for Collinsville Holiday Tournament

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – There's something about staying home for the holidays.

Edwardsville's basketball team will be doing just that this year for the first time in a number of years when the Tigers return to the 33rd edition of the Prairie Farms-Collinsville Holiday Classic tournament that gets under way Wednesday; EHS' first

game is set for 1 p.m. against McCluer North of the Suburban North Conference in St. Louis County.

The Tigers were part of the field when the tournament began in 1984 and played in the event through the 1990s, winning the 1992 championship over Collinsville and taking second in 1990, falling to the Kahoks.

“There's going to be a lot of good teams in the tournament,” said **Tiger coach Mike Waldo**. “McCluer North has a lot of athletes on their team and it's going to be a hard tournament to win. One good thing is that we'll be close to home and be able to practice in our own gym.

“We had some good experiences traveling to tournaments in the past; we played in the Charleston (Holiday Tournament at Eastern Illinois University) for 14 years, then went to the Carbondale Holiday Tournament before we went to the State Farm Classic in Bloomington the last couple of years.”

The field for this year's Collinsville tournament is loaded; besides Edwardsville, defending tournament champion and last year's IHSA Class 3A champ Belleville Althoff and East St. Louis are all in the field in addition to fellow Southwestern Conference teams Belleville East, Granite City and the host Kahoks. Representing central Illinois are Quincy, Lincoln, Ill., Decatur Eisenhower, Decatur MacArthur, Springfield Southeast and Urbana, while the Missouri side of the river is represented by Oakville, Riverview Gardens, Hazelwood East and the Stars.

“Our half of the bracket has a lot of good teams,” Waldo said, including 4-seed Southeast and Eisenhower. Edwardsville was awarded the No. 1 seed for the tournament, while the Crusaders were seeded second and Flyers third. “We'll be prepared and ready to go.

“There's teams who play a lot of different styles in the tournament and the more different styles you play against, the better.”

The tournament's opening game comes at 9 a.m. Wednesday when Southeast meets Oakville; opening-round games involving area teams include the Lancers meeting Eisenhower at 10:30 a.m., East St. Louis taking on Riverview Gardens at 4 p.m., the host Kahoks meeting MacArthur at 6:30 p.m. to open the evening session, the Crusaders meeting up with Hazelwood East at 8 p.m. and the Warriors taking on Quincy in the day's final game at 9:30 p.m.

An Edwardsville win would put them into an 11:30 a.m. Thursday quarterfinal game between the Lincoln-Urbana winner; with the winner advancing into a 6:30 p.m. Thursday semifinal contest; the final is set for 7:30 p.m. Friday.