

Robinson buzzer-beater gives Tigers 47-44 win over Spartans

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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CREVE COUER, Mo. - Just one shot. That's all it took for Edwardsville junior Malik Robinson.

It wasn't the most textbook of shots, but it was enough to get the job done.

Robinson managed to get a loose ball that had been tapped away from the basket, turn and get off a shot just before the buzzer that found nothing but net and give the Tigers a 47-44 win over DeSmet in the season-opener for both teams at the Spartans' west St. Louis County campus Tuesday night.

Robinson's shot gave him six points on the night while EHS senior Jack Marinko had a hot hand on the night, scoring 28 points.

It was a difficult assignment for the Tigers on opening night, and Tiger coach Mike Waldo acknowledged it. "I thought DeSmet was pretty hard to play against," Waldo said. "They had some big guys and really worked hard; later on, defensively, they took some things away from us, but our guys battled and played good defense. I think Malik did a lot of good stuff tonight, he took care of the ball and made some good plays.

"I'm not sure who kept the ball alive on the rebound (leading to Robinson's game-winner) – that was a good play."

Marinko's hot hand gave the Tigers a fairly comfortable lead most of the way. "Jack plays good; he's good with the ball and he's good at reading things," Waldo said. "Our guys did a good job of looking for him – Jack did a lot of things well."

As far as the Spartans went, Kent Williams was coaching his first game with the school. "I'm 36 years old," Williams – a Edwardsville resident – said. "Coach Waldo's been coaching for 36 years; it was exciting for me to go into my first game against him. He's a guy I've respected and looked up to in the coaching profession."

"I'm proud of my guys for fighting all the way back; when a kid (Marinko) like that gets hot, it's easy just to quit – we've got young kids; we fought."

Marinko led the way throughout the first half and into the second half, scoring 22 of his 28 points in the first half, but after Marinko kept up the hot hand at the start of the second half, Williams decided to put freshman Rico Barfield – one of eight freshmen or sophomores on the Spartan roster – on Marinko, who found a way to cool him off. "I told him 'I'm going to need you to guard tonight, so be ready'," Williams said. "I didn't know if I was going to play him, but when I see Marinko go off like that, I told him 'go in and do your job Rico.'"

"That's impressive for a kid playing his first game."

"I thought they got more help against (Marinko) – they had some pretty good athletes on him," Waldo said. "I just think they did a pretty good job."

Edwardsville worked their way to build a 13-6 lead at quarter time on the Spartans before riding Marinko to a 31-20 lead at the half; once the Spartans cooled off Marinko, the Tigers saw their lead shrink to 38-31 at three-quarter time. DeSmet stayed close to the Tigers in the final quarter and managed to forge a 44-44 tie with 18.4 seconds to go after Joey Bender put back a missed free throw and was fouled himself, hitting the subsequent free throw to draw DeSmet level.

That set up the final play; Marinko had a shot, but missed it and in the ensuing battle for the rebound, the ball was tapped away from the basket and went to Robinson, who got it, turned and fired a floater towards the basket from NBA three-point range; the ball found nothing but the bottom of the net as the buzzer went off.

Caleb Strohmeier added nine points for the Tigers on the night to go with Marinko's and Robinson's points; Michael Skoff led the Spartans with 12 points, with Bender, Collin Goodwin and Yaya Keita each adding six points.

Next up for the Tigers is their home opener at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday against Soldan International Studies of St. Louis city before taking on Belleville West at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 2 as part of the second SWC At the E Southwestern Conference festival at SIU-Edwardsville's Sam Vadalebene Center.

