

Balanced scoring paces Edwardsville girls to 80-22 triumph over Redbirds

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville's girls' basketball team got 16 points from Myriah Noodel-Hayward, while Quierra Love scored 14 and Kate Martin and Jaylen Townsend each added 13 as the Tigers - currently ranked atop the Associated Press Class 4A poll - ran their record to 18-0 with an 80-22 win over Alton Friday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Tigers lead for almost the entire game, jumping out to a 18-6 lead after the first quarter and a 39-9 advantage at halftime in recording the Southwestern Conference win.

Tigers' head coach Lori Blade felt that her team did a great job in sharing the ball throughout the contest.

"Our scoring up and down was good," Blade said. "The subs played some good minutes tonight. We took care of the ball a little better in the second half. You have to adjust to their athleticism; they are so quick, and that took us a minute. We made some adjustments, and spread it out a little bit, and good things happened."

The Redbirds held close in the opening four minutes, but the relentless Tiger pressure forced Alton into 31 turnovers, many of which lead to Edwardsville baskets.

"We had prepared; we knew it was going to be a tough basketball game," said Redbird coach Tammy Talbert. "We talked about breaking the game down into two-minute segments. If we can survive the first two minutes and keep it close, then let's talk about the next two minutes. I felt like we did OK the first two minutes, and then the next two minutes. So, the first four minutes, I felt like we were doing OK, but then, they put that press on, and we weren't running our press breaker. We're doing individual things, trying to get the ball up the sideline, and they're just too athletic and lengthy. They trapped us and then we make bad passes, and that turns into a quick two points for them."

The first few minutes were indeed close, as the Tigers jumped out to an early 6-2 lead on free throws from Pranger and baskets from Townsend and Noodel-Hayward. An early Laila McNeal basket had tied the score, and a pair of baskets from Ivoree Lacey pulled Alton to within 12-6. The Tigers scored the last six points of the period, behind two baskets from Love and another by Martin to make it 18-6 after the buzzer. A McNeal free throw at the start of the second made it 18-7, but the Tigers then scored the next 16 points in a row, with Love, Townsend, Martin and Noodel-Hayward all contributing to the run. A Rayn Tally basket broke the string, but Edwardsville scored the final five points to make it 39-9 at halftime.

The Tigers opened the second half with a 11-6 run before Jayla Fox hit a three ball to make the score 50-16. Edwardsville went on another run, scoring 27 straight points from

the end of the third to near the end of the fourth quarter, the only Redbird basket coming late in the game to make the final 80-22.

That the Redbirds were able to score early against the Tigers was a good sign at the start.

“It was,” Talbert said. “That’s kind of what we’ve really been talking about, is just, every possession. Let’s get a good possession offensively, let’s try to get a good stop for them, just break it down very, very minimally to those two-minute segments. And we’ve been really concentrating on that for two days. It was just making poor decisions, and then, unfortunately, once that happened, bad characteristics came out of the kids, and that was like a snowball effect. Then we had to make changes on the bench, and so, that’s what we decided to do.”

And the fact that the Tigers were able to take Lacey out of the game effectively was a big factor.

“Ivoree can be a inside force; she’s had some really good games for us,” Talbert said. “We’ve talked about that with other kids that when they do that to Ivoree, the guards, you’ve got to step up, you know, and get yourself into the offense a little bit more effectively, be more available. We just didn’t have that tonight. And Edwardsville is one of the best, obviously, teams in the state of Illinois. It’s a tough battle when you come up against them.”

The Tigers next play at St. Joseph’s Academy in suburban St. Louis on January 17, while the Redbirds Granite City on January 16 and East St. Louis January 18.



[Brent Feeney also contributed to this story.](#)