

Marinko scores 28, Strohmeier 15 in Tigers' 82-53 loss at Belleville West

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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BELLEVILLE – A balanced scoring attack led by Jaylin Mosby's 18 points, E.J. Lidenl's 16 and Keith Randolph, Jr.'s 14 helped Belleville West to a 82-53 win over Edwardsville Friday night in a Southwestern Conference basketball game at the West gym.

Jack Marinko led all scorers with 28 points, while Caleb Strohmeier added 15 for the Tigers, who fell to the Maroons for the second time this season.

Edwardsville was able to execute their defensive schemes well in the first half, but Mosby hit key baskets that helped the Maroons jump to a big lead.

“Oh yeah, West — they've are good this year,” said Tigers coach Mike Waldo. “They're well coached, they've got good players, they did a really good job. I thought the first half, we executed defensively a lot of the things we wanted to do, (Mosby) really hurt us the first half. And we knew we had to give up some things to try to defend them. And I thought (Mosby) hurt us the first half, but I don't think that was through any fault of our players; I think they executed our defense well. It's just he got shots and he made them. So, actually, I thought defensively, we executed a lot of things well the first half.”

The Maroons took control in the second half, getting into a rhythm and limiting their mistakes.

“We got into a rhythm,” said West coach Joe Muniz, “and the biggest thing is we turned it over a couple of times, they missed some shots, got some runouts. And then, Jaylin Mosby, what can you say? He opened it up for us, and we knew that coming in. I told our guys they can try to do their best to take away E.J. and Malachi (Smith), which I knew they would. But they couldn't take away our whole team. And we've just got too many good players.”

The first quarter started evenly, with neither team gaining a clear-cut advantage, but later on, the Maroons went on the first run, getting a pair of threes from Lawrence Brazil III and Mosby along with a basket from Lidenl in a 9-0 run to take a 13-6 lead. A Marinko three ball and free throw from Strohmier cut the lead to four, but baskets from Marcellus Romious and Brazil gave West a 17-10 lead after one. The Maroon lead was extended by as much as eight during most of the second quarter before a Marinko three cur the lead to 27-22 late in the period. West then went on a 9-4 run in the final stages, getting key baskets from Mosby, Smith, and Curtis Williams to take a 38-26 lead at halftime.

The Maroons scored the first three points of the second half, but Marinko hit back-to-back threes to cut the West lead to 41-32. The Maroons began to take total control of the game after that, as Brazil, Randolph and Smith all scored the next seven points, making it 48-32. After an Edwardsville time out, West outscored the Tigers 16-4, with Lidenl leading the way with a pair of dunks, along with Smith and Brazil hitting from outside to give West a 64-36 lead after three. The Tigers kept battling, as Strohmeier and Marinko kept Edwardsville in the game, hitting shots from underneath and outside, but in the end, Mosby, Williams and Randolph all hit baskets down the stretch to make the final 82-53.

The Maroons three-point shooting helped make things difficult for the Tigers throughout the match.

“Any team that's got a guy who can score inside and out like (Lidenl), and a guy who's good away from the basket (Smith), and then (Randolph) in the post. If you've got that, and you've got guys making threes, that's always hard to guard. They were definitely hard to guard, yes.’

And that the Tigers kept battling throughout the game was definitely a positive.

“We just try to keep doing what we've been practicing,” Waldo said. “And I thought our guys battled the whole game against a good team, and we try to keep executing what we've been practicing.”

That it's hard to guard the Maroon players is a big plus for West.

“It's hard to guard us,” Muniz said. “You know, Mike has had a history of winning 700 games. He wouldn't guard a few people on your team, and he'd take away your strengths and exploit your weaknesses. And a guy like Jaylin, and Brazil, and Curtis, and Zion (Woodie), and Marcellus, Marcellus stepped up and hit a shot. All these guys cans score. Then you've got to play E.J. and Malachi man to man, and you can't help as much as they wanted to, and that's a hard match-up to play those guys man to man.”

And Marinko, who entered the game averaging 27.7 points per game, came in for high praise from the Maroons' coach.

“You know, he did a great job getting his points tonight,” Muniz said. “He's a great player. I really thought we had our team in there throughout the third quarter; I really thought we did a great job guarding him in the second half. Early, he got off a little bit early at the beginning of the third quarter, but after that, I thought we did a really, really good job guarding him. He's a special kid, he just never gives up, and you give him an inch, he's gonna take it. Just what he's been able to do all season consistently is beyond amazing to me.”

The Tigers, now 12-7 on the season and 5-3 in the league, hosts East St. Louis next Friday night in a 7:30 pm tip, then travel to Granite City in the first of a three-game road swing February 9.