

Edwardsville dominates in first half again, defeat Belleville East 54-20

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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BELLEVILLE – The Edwardsville High School football team had another big first-half performance as quarterback Kendall Abdur-Rahman threw for two touchdowns and ran for two more, Justin Johnson, Jr. scored three times and the defense ran an interception back for a touchdown as the Tigers scored 47 points on their way to a 54-20 win over Belleville East in a Southwestern Conference game Friday night at the Lancers' stadium.

The Tigers scored the first 34 points of the game and lead at halftime 47-7, forcing a second half running clock for the second week in a row.

Edwardsville coach Matt Martin felt it was a good win for his club.

“It was a good win,” Martin said. “Belleville East does things well; they move the ball well, you know, you’ve just got to tackle, try to keep them out of the end zone. We did a pretty good job of that tonight.”

The Edwardsville offense was able to spread the ball around and got contributions from their entire offense.

“We spread the ball around pretty well, we ran the ball real well tonight,” Martin said. “That’s usually a good sign for our offensive line and our receivers blocking downfield. Chase Moore did a great job with second effort blocks downfield.”

Everything is clicking and going in the right direction for the Tigers. It’s a tribute to their hard work on the practice field.

“It’s always good to win,” Martin said. “Their hard work’s paying off, and we’re going to try to get better. We’ve got a real tough opponent coming up here in Belleville West, so we’ll see. We’ve got to keep it going in the right direction.”

After opening the game with a Lancer three-and-out, the Tigers scored on their first possession, climaxing with an Abdur-Rahman 12-yard touchdown pass to Moore just over two minutes into the proceedings. Brendan Latham’s convert was good, and Edwardsville took a 7-0 lead. The Tigers made it 14-0 later in the quarter, as Johnson took a pitchout and ran 26 yards to the Lancer 40, then made a great run off the left side 40 yards for the touchdown with 4:50 left in the quarter.

Early in the second quarter, it only took Edwardsville 50 seconds to go 67 yards. The key play in the drive was a 39-yard run by Johnson off right end, with Johnson going down the right side again 15 yards for the touchdown, making the score 21-0 after the convert.

On the next Edwardsville possession, Abdur-Rahman got away from an East pass rush, rolled to his left and found a wide open Noah Goldsmith for a 74-yard touchdown strike to make the score 28-0. After another defensive stop, on the first play after a penalty, Abdur-Rahman kept the ball on the right side, found a seam and raced 65 yards to the end zone for another Tiger touchdown. The convert kick was blocked, keeping the score 34-0.

The Lancers were able to answer back on the next possession, and quarterback Kienan Waller completed four passes on the five-play drive, climaxing with a 16-yard touchdown pass to Jaden Harris-Hemphill, making the score 34-7 after Alex Maxim's conversion.

Edwardsville answered right back as Johnson ran the ball for a total of 35 yards on the drive and Abdur-Rahman had a nice 19-yard run to the right side. Abdur-Rahman went the final three yards himself for the score with 40.7 seconds remaining to make it 41-7. But the Tigers weren't done just yet.

On the first play after the touchdown, Ryan Strohmeier stepped in front of a Waller pass, intercepted and ran it back 28 yards for the touchdown, the second week in a row the Edwardsville defense ran back an interception all the way. Latham missed the point after, making the halftime score 47-7, forcing the running clock in the second half.

On the first possession of the second half, the Tiger reserves put together a great drive of 59 yards in four plays, with Kenyon Johnson starting things off with a brilliant 54-yard run through the right side. Malachi Revis took the ball in from two yards out to make the score 54-7.

The Lancers scored on their next possession, putting together a nine play, 80-yard drive, with Waller hitting Kevaughn Gaines with a pass good for 25 yards, and later connecting with Kannon Walker for 26 more. The Tiger defense held the Lancers at the one for three straight plays before Mikey Foster scored on fourth down to make it 54-14 after the convert. The Lancers got one last touchdown on the game's final play, as Waller hit Yohance Flager from 15 yards for the score. The Lancers declined to try the conversion, making the final score 54-20.

The Tigers face Belleville West in their final home game of the regular season in a very critical matchup, which will also be Edwardsville's homecoming and Senior Night. The kickoff is set for 7 p.m., and Martin is looking forward to the challenge against the Maroons.

“I think we’ve got a tough opponent in Belleville West,” Martin said. “That just what I told the kids now. I told the kids ‘Great win, good job, we need to start preparing mentally for a tough ball game’.”



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)