

Anderson scores 20, Flyers rally past Edwardsville after strong Tigers' start, Granite advances to Saturday game vs. East Side

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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COLLINSVILLE – East St. Louis junior guard Jashawn Anderson scored 20 points, mainly in the second half, as the Flyers came back from a 30-20 halftime deficit to defeat Edwardsville 57-49 in the fifth and sixth place semifinals at the 35th Prairie Farms Collinsville Holiday Classic Friday evening at Vergil Fletcher Gym.

The Tigers executed their game plan very well, especially defensively, but the shots that Edwardsville was able to connect on in the first half didn't drop in the second.

“They made some shots, (Anderson) hurt us,” said Tigers coach Dustin Battas. “(Anderson) got to the basket, had some baskets, and I think he was probably the leading scorer for them. But we did a lot of things good. The difference is that we had made a lot of shots in the first half to put us up 10, and some of those same shots we got, we just had a hard time getting in. And then, they did a good job of making their free throws down the stretch.”

Anderson did a great job of taking over the game for the Flyers and is another weapon East Side has in its arsenal.

“Yeah, he's really fast, and you spend so much energy trying to take (Terrence Hargrove, Jr.) away,” Battas said, “but then, they've got some other guys who can really hurt you. (Cornellious LeFlore) can really shoot, (Elijah Rice) and (Richard Robinson)

can do some stuff, and that opens up lanes for him, but we just had a hard time getting an angle, and keeping him in front of us. It wasn't for lack of trying. Our guys really executed our defensive game plan well, and that's just what good players do."

The Flyers came out flat after losing their quarterfinal game earlier in the day to Lincoln in overtime, and Anderson gave East Side the spark they needed.

"Exactly," said East St. Louis coach Mark Chambers. "We came out, started kind of flat coming after that emotional loss this afternoon, and I just wanted to see how the guys responded. First half wasn't so good, but Jashawn just took over, really. We had a lot of driving lanes, he took them and was able to finish. Fortunately, we come away a tough victory."

Chambers gave full credit to the Edwardsville coaching staff for putting together the game plan against his team.

"They played a really good game, (Battas) had a really good game plan," Chambers said. "They execute, this team executed really well, and it really tested our team. You know, just playing them a couple of weeks ago, with a lopsided victory. You could really see the improvement of their team. Coach really needs to be commended for that."

The Tigers were able to jump to a 12-9 lead at the end of the first period, and as the second quarter started, were able to increase their lead to 17-9, thanks to a three from Malik Robinson and a basket from Jaylon Tuggle. The Flyers then went on a 7-0 run with a three from Rice and a pair of free throws and a basket from Travion Jones to cut the lead to 17-16. Robinson immediately hit a three, Brennan Weller scored from outside and Matt Stopka put in a rebound to lift the Tigers back up 24-18. Stopka then connected on a three-point play and Robinson nailed a three at the buzzer to give Edwardsville a 30-20 lead at halftime.

Robinson led the Tigers with 12 points on the evening and seems ready to take on a leadership role with the team.

"Malik's up for a challenge," Battas said, "and Malik's a really smart guy, and he's got some really good skill and he works hard. We had some other guys that did a really good job of getting Malik to the ball in the right spot and screening for him; Nic Hemken, I thought, had a great game rebounding and screening for Malik. Jaylon Tuggle was excellent in help defense; I'm really proud of Jaylon."

A.J. Robertson also had a good game for Edwardsville.

“Yes, A.J. can score, and he tries really hard,” Battas said. “Those are two good characteristics to have. He tries really hard on defense; he benefits from some of the new things we’re putting in on offense. And Brennan Weller as well. Brennan Weller guarded (Hargrove) almost the whole game; that’s a tall task for a sophomore. And we’re really proud of him for the effort.”

In fact, it was Robertson who started the second half on a positive note for the Tigers, as he put back his own miss to score and increase the lead to 32-20. Anderson connected on a three, and Tuggle scored underneath to make it 34-23. Later on, with the score 37-26, the Flyers went on a 14-3 run with Anderson scoring the last six points of the stretch, including a driving lay up at the three quarter time buzzer to tie the game at 40-40.

The two teams traded baskets at the start of the final quarter, with Anderson hitting a driving lay-in to give the Flyers a 44-42 lead, one they would never relinquish. Jones then scored off an inbounds pass and Hargrove drove in for a dunk to increase the edge to 48-42, but Robinson connected on a three to cut the lead to 48-45. It quickly became 52-47 for East Side, and from there, the Flyers outscored the Tigers 5-2 as East Side converted its free-throw chances to clinch the 57-49 win.

Roberson scored 11 for the Tigers, while Jones helped the Flyers cause with 11.

And even though it was in the Collinsville Holiday Classic, it still was just another night in the Southwestern Conference.

“Exactly, exactly,” Chambers said with a smile. “It’s fun to be here, it’s a fun environment, excellent environment, and our kids really, really enjoy it.”

The Flyers will play in the consolation final Saturday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. against the winner of the semifinal between Granite City and Decatur MacArthur, and Chambers will have his team ready to go.

“Well, we’re waiting to see who our opponent will be,” Chambers said, “and at that point, we’ll know a little bit better what to expect, but we’ll look at some film tonight. And whoever it is, we’re just going to have to be ready to play Flyer basketball, and look to get a victory.”

And things don’t get any easier for East Side, as they face Bloomington, St. Louis Vashon and Alton in their first three games as the calendar turns to 2019.

“It’s going to be tough to start,” Chambers said, “but our main goal is to get better every day, get better every game. And we’re doing that. We have a really tough schedule. I did that on purpose, so when it comes time for March, we should be really, really good. And that’s what I’m looking forward to.

“Never a dull moment,” Chambers continued. “But that’s what we want, though. We want to put these kids through adverse situations, and to see how we respond. And because the more that we are able to get through those situations, the better we’re going to be as a team.”

The Tigers play the Warriors-Generals loser at 12 noon on Saturday, and Battas thinks that the Tigers breaking even in the tournament would be quite the accomplishment for his team.

“Yeah, I think our guys appreciate the opportunity to compete, and they know how good the tournament is,” Battas said. “and being in the championship bracket, we’re going to have tough teams to play. And that was certainly the case today. We’re excited to compete again tomorrow, we know it’s going to be someone good, and we’re looking forward getting into the gym in the morning, and having a game plan ready to go, and try to win that 12 o’clock game.”





BOYS BASKETBALL

35TH PRAIRIE FARMS COLLINSVILLE HOLIDAY CLASSIC

QUARTERFINALS

SPRINGFIELD SOUTHEAST 85, EDWARDSVILLE 36: In the quarterfinals, Terrion Murdix lead five Spartan players in double figures with 17 points as defending champion Southeast advanced to the semifinals with a win over the Tigers.

Herb McMath had 14 points, Damon Davis and Stepheon Sims 12 each and James Dent 11 for the Spartans.

Carson Phillips led Edwardsville with nine points, while A.J. Robertson and Malik Robinson had six each.

COLLINSVILLE 70, DECATUR MACARTHUR 57: Ray'Sean Taylor led the way for the Kahoks with 21 points in helping the host team advance to the last four on Friday afternoon.

Marshall Harrison added 16 points and Aaron Molten 14 in the win for Collinsville.

The Generals were led by Keon Jones with 28 points, while Kari Taliferro had nine.

LINCOLN 52, GRANITE CITY 47: Jahkeis Tippet led the Warriors with 11 points, while Jerry Watson, Jr. had nine in Granite's loss in the quarterfinals.

Jermaine Hamlin had 24 points for the Railsplitters, and Kaden Froebe had 14 to help Lincoln advance to the semifinals.

SEMIFINALS

COLLINSVILLE 40, LINCOLN 34: Friday night in the semifinals, Taylor had 19 points to help the Kahoks earn a title game rematch with Southeast Saturday night.

Harrison aided the Collinsville effort with eight points, while Froebe led the Railers with 12 and Will Ewald added 10.

Collinsville, now 13-2, and Springfield Southeast will square off in the final Saturday night at 7:30 p.m.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH PLACE SEMIFINALS

GRANITE CITY 66, DECATUR MACARTHUR 62 (OT): Keyon White and Zidane Moore each had 17 points as Granite outscored MacArthur 8-4 in the overtime to get the win in the fifth and sixth place semifinal.

Taliferro led the Generals with 17 points, while Jones added 12 and Kaeden Lowary had 11.

The Warriors, now 9-4, play against East St. Louis in the playoff game Saturday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.