

Edwardsville's Volleyball Team, 11-4, Has Rematch With O'Fallon This Week, Plus Game Summaries

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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville's boys' volleyball team enters the upcoming week with an 11-4 overall mark, 3-1 in the Southwestern Conference. This week, the Tigers will host O'Fallon in a rematch of a meeting Mar. 28, where the Panthers defeated the Tigers 25-13, 25-18 at the Panther Dome. The second meeting takes place on Apr. 23 at 4:30 p.m. Edwardsville then travels to Belleville East Apr. 25 in another 4:30 p.m start.

Tigers Overcome First Game Difficulty, Defeat Belleville West 25-22, 25-12

EDWARDSVILLE – The Edwardsville High boys volleyball team fought off some first game difficulty with good net defense, then gained momentum in the second game with service point streaks that helped the Tigers gain a 25-22, 25-12 win over Belleville West in a Southwestern Conference match played this past Tuesday at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

It was the second straight SWC win for the Tigers, coming off a 25-9, 25-18 win over Alton last Thursday night.

The Tigers had trouble generating anything offensively in the first game, thanks to a strong service game from the Maroons that kept Edwardsville off-balance. In the second game, a four-point service point streak from Henry Hupp helped give Edwardsville vital momentum in getting the win in the match.

“In the first game, we had some difficulty passing their strong serves,” said Tigers’ coach Scott Smith. “Our net defense stepped up, and we were able to overcome West. In the second game, our passing was better, and we established momentum from the second game on.”

It was the second game where the Tigers were able to get the momentum going after the difficult opener. The Maroons called time out when the Tigers got to 7-4, thanks to Hupp’s service streak, and for the rest of the second game, the Tigers kept the ball, thanks to several point streaks from various players. In fact, West was only able to score three service points in the entire second game.

“We had every player after Henry’s streak have a service point streak of their own,” Smith said. “Service points were the main difference, as West demonstrated their service ability by avoiding several of our players.”

Brock Hennig led the way for the Tigers with eight service points, while Hupp and Eric Epenesa had seven each. Josh Whittenburg had nine kills, with Daniel Pauk and Max Sellers contributing four each, Hupp led with 10 digs, while Hennig had 15 assists, and Epenesa had four blocks, while Pauk had two.





Edwardsville Utilize Strengths in Lineup, Sweep Redbirds in Boys Volleyball Match 25-9, 25-18

EDWARDSVILLE – The Edwardsville High School boys volleyball team was able to utilize its strengths and used a different rotation as the Tigers swept Alton in a Southwestern Conference match 25-9, 25-18 Thursday evening at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Redbirds kept up a fighting spirit throughout the match, and had a good run in the second game, but the Tigers were able to prevail.

“They were getting our servers to be moving all over the place,” said Edwardsville head coach Scott Smith. “They had some full serves that were bringing us back, and they were getting some shorter serves, some higher ones as well, so mixing it up allowed us to have the players move around the court a lot.”

The Tigers experimented with some different combinations during the match, and everything worked out very well.

“I think the boys did really well,” Smith said. “We have some drills where boys might be in a different position than they normally are, depending on who’s available at practice, and tonight, the boys were able to utilize those strengths to where they were

able to show what they're capable of, playing a little bit different rotation and spot and setup than where we're used to."

The different rotations and positioning will definitely help the Tigers down the road.

"Exactly," Smith said. "If we run into any trouble, or we need to slow down the pace of a match, I know that I have the confidence I can put in some of the boys that haven't had as many points out there, and haven't seen as many serves."

As the season goes into its second month, Smith feels that the Tigers have exceeded expectations thus far.

"Our boys have done even better than I thought they were," Smith said. "Last weekend, at the Vianney tournament, the boys did very impressive, and beat a very good Pattonville (team), which is one of the top teams in the area; they're currently 9-2. They ended up winning the tournament over Vianney, and Pattonville has a lot of similarities to the way that we play, where there's a lot of players who can do a lot of things. Our team, we have a lot of strengths in different areas. There's one player who dominates, one player who you need to count on take over. But we do have that leadership, if needed. But it's the confidence and skill level and depth that we have."

The first game started off with the Tigers scoring the first five points, getting kills from Frankie Holloway, John Matthews and Henry Hupp to take the 5-0 lead before the Redbirds scored their first point. Perkey then served up three points in a row, getting good shots from Donnell Craig, Kieran Favazza and Antorres Simon to cut the Edwardsville lead to 5-3. The Tigers got the ball back, and Hupp served up three points to make the score 9-3, forcing an Alton time out. Hupp then served up another point that made the score 10-3 before the Redbirds got the service back. After an exchange of points, Eric Epenesa served up back-to-back aces, then a Holloway spike was deflected out to give the Tigers a 14-4 lead.

After another exchange of points that made it 15-5, Holloway served up six straight points for the Tigers to bring the score to 21-5 before the Redbirds got the ball back. The teams exchanged points before Epenesa drove home a kill to give Edwardsville the 25-9 first game win.

The Tigers scored four of the first five points of game two to take a 4-1 lead before the Redbirds scored twice to cut the edge to 4-3. The Tigers got the ball back, and behind the services of Daniel Pauk, got the score to 8-3 before Alton regained the ball. The teams again exchanged points before Holloway served up three more points to make the

score 12-4, thanks to back-to-back kills from Ben Strotheide. The Redbirds called time, and after another exchange of points, Joel De La Torre Cruz served up four more points, making it 19-6, forcing another Alton time out.

The teams exchanged points once again to make it 21-9 for Edwardsville, then Hance served up back-to-back points to make it 21-11. After another exchange of points that made it 22-12, the Redbirds outscored the Tigers 6-2 in their best run of the game to make it 24-18 before a Preston Weaver dink ended the match at 25-18.

Weaver had 22 assists to lead the Tigers, while Hupp had 10 digs, De La Torre Cruz had six digs, Holloway had nine service points, Weaver had seven points, including three aces, Hupp had six kills while both Holloway and Pauk had five kills each.

Smith does like the Tigers' chances, but knows the Southwestern Conference schedule is always a tough one.

“We’re always looking for O’Fallon again; we’ve go them in two weeks, if I’m not mistaken, but it’s always something, with every conference match that we have, we’ll try to do our best, and prove how we can do, and we see the growth of the teams on the other side of the court as well.”

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