

Edwardsville Gets Goals from Nolan, Weller, and Agweudu in 3-0 Win Over Belleville East

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – The Edwardsville boys soccer team got a seventh-minute goal from Cooper Nolan, and made it hold up until late goals from Brennan Weller and Tony Agweudu secured the three points as the Tigers defeated Belleville East 3-0 in a Southwestern Conference match Thursday evening at Tiger Stadium.

The Tigers were able to control possession for much of the match, not allowing the Lancers many good opportunities, and when East did have a chance, goalie Gabe Noll was there to stop them in recording the team's first clean sheet of the season.

"I think we did a decent job of connecting it," said Edwardsville head coach Mark Heiderscheid. "We're still dealing with a lot of change; we've got a lot of players, but we've got different ones that have been in and out. We also, on the fly, decided to go ahead and structurally change our team again tonight," he said with a laugh, "because the players are like 'well, you know, I like this.' You know, sometimes, I like to actually empower them where they'll have an idea, like, a few years ago, in 2012, and so we'll want to go ahead and have. let's have Bailey (Winfield) here, let's have Frankie Verdu go ahead and go this direction, it was like, 'yeah, let's go ahead and do that.' It was right before the Granite City game.

"And so, here, it's like, you know what? Let's go ahead and change how we're doing things, and we flipped a little bit more aggressively out there on the field. And it was a

good look. It did come with its growing pains out there because there were some moments when all of a sudden, I thought East did a very good job of countering us. I thought that they were able to kind of get between our lines, where as before, with us having boxed things in a little bit more so at midfield; I thought that would have helped that, But still, I thought the kids were pretty effective with both Weller and Cooper sitting up there, I thought that was good.

"But it's still a game that very deep into it, it was still 1-0. We get the goal, but then, it was really hard to get the next one, and I thought East was doing everything that they could to go ahead and equalize it."

The Tigers were able to get the two late goals to put the match away, and Agweudu's goal in the 76th minute was quite a thing of beauty as well.

"Yeah, it was," Heiderscheid said. "It's great for Tony because he's a kid that, all of a sudden, he found himself a little nicked. And so, we hadn't played him much a couple of games ago, against Marion. And that was kind of hard for him because he really wasn't ready to go; he was ineffective on that one. Then we turn around, and against O'Fallon, he's not starting, and he was OK, but still kind of feeling his way. So for him to really make the impact here, I think on this one, was fantastic. We really want to keep him doing what he's been doing all summer, and that's been being a guy that's been a very good threat for us. And so, with him, you have so many players like he and Weller just continue to a very special player up top."

The Tigers struck in the seventh minute, when Logan Loftus, whom Heiderscheid felt also had a very good game with his runs down the flanks, got a nice cross into Nolan, who first-timed the ball past Lancer goalie Caleb Simpson to give Edwardsville a 1-0 lead. Two minutes later, in the ninth, Adam Sneed had a great chance when he got off a good shot, but it curled just past the post, keeping the score at 1-0.

The Lancers got their first good opportunity in the 13th minute, when Owen Trudt, their leading scorer, got a good through ball and broke in on Noll, but Noll was able to come up with a nice save to preserve the Tigers' advantage. In the 22nd, it was Simpson's turn to come up big when he snagged a promising cross from Brendan James, then one minute later, Sneed had another good opportunity, but Simpson dove left to smother the chance.

Late in the first half, Simpson kept the Lancers in the match, coming up with three saves on some good Tiger shots, as the half ended with Edwardsville in the lead at 1-0.

The second half started with the Tigers having the majority of the chances, especially in the 58th minute, when Agweudu went for a nice run, going through the East defense, but

Simpson was there to make the save to keep it 1-0. The pace of play increased halfway through the second half, as both teams were looking for chances. In the 65th minute, Weller went for a run, setting up Sneed for a shot that was stopped, and Jakob Doyle missed on the rebound, keeping the scoreline as it was.

The Lancers had a chance to equalize in the 71st minute, but Noll slid out to thwart the chance on an errant backpass, and then in the 73rd minute, off a Tiger corner, a shot by Ashton Kauffman was knocked away, but the rebound went right to Weller, who slotted the ball home to double the Tigers' lead to 2-0. Three minutes later, in the 76th, Agweudu took a Sneed through ball and used his speed to make a great run, which ended with his shot beating Simpson to the far post and into the net to make the final 3-0 score.

Edwardsville improves to 4-1-0 on the season, 2-0-0 in the Southwestern Conference, and now travels to Morton for a tournament starting on Friday. Heiderscheid feels that his team and its depth and work rate will serve them very well.

“I think, overall, very good team effort,” Heiderscheid said, “and it’s really going to continue with this group, is that we have so many players, so many kids, that can interchange. ...there’s so many guys you can really flip out there as starters, because we really are interchangeable, and so many kids really impact the game for us this year, which is nice.”

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