



Justin Harper Scored Two First Period Goals In Tigers Win Over Parkway West, Likes Team's Chemistry In Team's Big Start

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EAST ALTON - Edwardsville senior forward Justin Harper scored twice in the first period, including the second of a two-goal span in just 24 seconds, to help the Tigers to a 6-1 win over Parkway West in a Mid-States Club Hockey Association game Thursday night at the East Alton Ice Arena.

The Longhorns came into the game unbeaten and untied at 4-0-0, but Edwardsville dominated the game from the opening face-off, outshooting West 19-0 in the first period and 57-7 in the game.

"Yeah, for sure," Harper said during a postgame interview. "We saw their record, and we saw who they played, and we weren't fazed. We just kept it rolling, and played our game, how we usually do, and it pulled through here."

The Tigers' first two goals in the 24-second span, which included a power-play goal to open the scoring, were part of a first period which saw Edwardsville take a 4-0 lead after the first 15 minutes. The early advantage seemed to take a lot of pressure off of the team.

"The early goals always boost our confidence every game," Harper said. "It puts fire on us, it keeps us rolling, and we put that through the whole game, and then, we've got a game for us."

The two goals Harper scored in the game were results of good play from the Tigers.

"I just had a little breakaway, and cut inside," Harper said of his first goal, "and got a little rip inside, and it happened to bounce off the knob of the goalie, I believe and bounced right over him. And then, the second one, I just created a little lane for myself, got open, ripped it, five-hole on the ground, and it just slid in."

The Tigers are missing a couple of key players, both Will Schuster and Sam Gibbons, to injury, but Edwardsville still has some big scoring punch and depth, and those different weapons are one of the biggest reasons for the team's early success.

"We were missing some of our top guys," Harper said, "and even that doesn't stop us. We kept playing our game, and we know who we have on our team, and we have chemistry, so we can work together, and we can always put it in the back of the net, no matter who we got."

The Tigers are now on a four-game winning streak, and are unbeaten in five of their first six games. The great start is something that hasn't happened for the Tigers in quite some time, and Harper is confident that the team will keep things going in the right direction.

"Yep, exactly," Harper said. "We haven't had this for a long time, so we're going to keep it rolling as long as possible; hopefully, as long as we can, and just keep it rolling, and we'll be good."

Perhaps the biggest difference between this season and last is the team's chemistry, and it's a big help as the Tiger players and enjoying each other, and are also having fun on the ice.

"We've got a lot more chemistry this year," Harper said. "A lot of the guys are a lot closer, and we're having a lot more fun this year. I feel like it's not all pressure and stress. We're all working as a team, and having fun, and getting the chemistry going, and we're going to keep it rolling."