

Weller Earns Game MVP Honors With 12 Points As Edwardsville Bounces Back With 46-37 Win Over Althoff Catholic In Scott Credit Union Shootout

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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville forward Brennan Weller led all scorers with 12 points and was named the game's Most Valuable Player for his efforts as the Tigers' boys team bounced back nicely from a loss the night before to Collinsville with a 46-37 win over Belleville Althoff Catholic in the second game of the day at the Edwardsville Scott Credit Union Shootout Saturday afternoon at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Tigers jumped out to a 20-7 lead in the first quarter, and were never headed in the game, although the Crusaders did make things somewhat close near the end. Good Edwardsville free throw shooting at the end helped put the game away.

"Any win is a good win, and they're a good, competitive team," Tigers' head coach Dustin Battas said. "and coach (Greg) Leib does a great job with them. So certainly, we're proud of our guys, and happy with their ability to come out on top."

The Edwardsville players responded very well from the loss the night before to the Kahoks, and played well the entire 32 minutes.

"They did," Battas said. "They were fired up and ready to go, had a great first quarter, they had a good walk-through this morning, and our guys like to compete. They were really looking forward to playing in the shootout."

The Tigers did get out to a good start with the 20-7 lead after the first quarter, and Battas felt that was an important key to the game.

"I thought we got out to a good start," Battas said. "Twenty points in the first quarter, we held them. Our goal is to always to hold the team we're playing to under 40 points with good defense and good rebounding. I think they got nine rebounds. So the start was great, and our ability to limit their points on offense gave us a good chance to win."

Weller had a good game as well, earning the MVP honors.

"Brennan did good," said Battas. "We need Brennan to continue to be consistent, and he's a smart guy that works hard, and gives us everything he has, and he's going to keep getting better."

That the Tigers were able to keep Althoff under 40 points was very good, and the offense is starting to come around as well, with many players contributing points.

"We'll keep working on offense," Battas said, "and Gabe James and Preston Weaver came off the bench and made some baskets for us. And we know that Jack Nafzinger's

had some good games for us, so we're starting to find four, five guys that can score some points for us. And our goal is to keep playing great defense and get a little better on offense."

Edwardsville started off with a 9-2 run to open the game, getting a three from Weller at the top of the key, then after a basket from Mack Harris, got a pair of baskets from Weller, along with one from Nafzinger, to take a 9-2 lead early on. forcing an Althoff time out. A three from Jack Bruening and another basket cut the Tiger lead to 9-7, but Edwardsville scored the next 11 points, as baskets from Weaver, Ethan Young, a three from James, and baskets from Nic Hemken and another from James gave Edwardsville their 20-7 lead at quarter time.

The teams exchanged baskets and free throws to start the second quarter that made the score 24-11 before a Weller basket and a three-point play from Nafzinger made it 29-11 for the Tigers. A Harris basket made it 29-13, but two more baskets made it 33-13, but at the end of the quarter, a three-ball and a driving basket from Tyler Tieman cut the lead to 33-18 for Edwardsville at halftime.

The third quarter started out slowly for both sides, with an exchange of threes making the score 36-21. After an Edwardsville time out, the Tigers got a three from James and a Weller free throw to extend the lead to 40-21 before a Bruening three made the score 40-24 after three quarters. The Crusaders cut the lead to 40-28 at the start of the final quarter, getting a driving lay-in from Bruening and a floater from Dalton Burgner. An exchange of free throws followed that made the score 43-31 for Edwardsville, then Althoff got baskets from Ty Beasley and Bruening to cut the lead to single digits at 43-35. Free throws from Hemken and Weaver clinched the game for Edwardsville, making the 46-37 final score.

Besides Weller, James was the only other scorer on either team in double figures with 10 points. Weaver had seven points for the Tigers, while Nafzinger had five points, Young and Hemken four points each, and Carson Philipps and Calen McKinney two points apiece. The Crusaders were led by Tieman, who had nine points, while Burgner and Bruening had eight points each, Harris scores six, and Jordan Lewis, Will Ache and Beasley all scored two points.

The Tigers are now 5-2 on the season, and face a pair of big tests this coming week, hosting defending IHSA Class 3A champions East St. Louis on Tuesday, before going to Granite City on Friday. The games will give Edwardsville two more opportunities to bounce back against quality opponents, and Battas is looking forward to the upcoming week.

"Yes, and we ended up playing Granite in the regional, beating them then," Battas said, bouncing back from a regular-season loss to the Warriors at home last season. "We have a good rivalry with Granite City, so we're really looking forward to that on Friday, but first, we've got to worry about the Flyers on Tuesday, and we know that they're going to be really well-prepared, and they're going to be a hard team to play against."

[Chris Rhodes also contributed to this story.](#)