

Love Leads The Way With 12 Points, Harris Adds 11 As Tigers Get Crucial SWC Win Over Flyers 55-40

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Senior point guard Que Love led the way with 12 points, while sophomore forward Sydney Harris added 11 as Edwardsville took a crucial Southwestern Conference win over East St. Louis 55-40 Tuesday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

It was the first game for the Tigers since Dec. 28, a loss to Incarnate Word Academy 56-54 in the final of the Visitation Christmas Tournament, and for the most part, Edwardsville played very well against the Flyers, especially defensively.

"You know, it was," said Tigers head coach Lori Blade. "And then, we tried some different stuff, But you know what? They can shoot it, and you saw it there at the end, but I was disappointed that we didn't go to contest it a little bit better towards the last three, four minutes. But overall, I thought we did a really good job. We boarded well, we outboarded them, turned the ball over a little bit too much again. but we're showing a little bit more discipline. We're trying to focus on the mental side of it, but it something doesn't work, then getting into something else on offense rather than just relying on our physical skills so much, and we've got to pick up the mental side of it."

The Tigers did have that long layoff between games, and the players were definitely ready to get back on the court. And it comes at what may be the most important stretch of the season, where Edwardsville will face O'Fallon, Parkway North, Collinsville, Alton and St. Joseph's Academy. The win over the Flyers is a very good start, indeed.

"I'm sure that they were ready," Blade said with a smile. "You get those three hard days in a row, and it gets hard, because your conditioning and everything, so I'm sure they were ready to play. But we've got a tough two weeks span here. We turn right around now with O'Fallon, and Parkway (North) on Saturday, so it'll be a good test for us, and we'll see. But for the most part, I liked what we did tonight, but we'll see."

The unselfishness of the Edwardsville players was also a key to the game, as defenses will key on Harris, and it will be important for the Tigers to have another scorer getting key points during upcoming games.

"Yes, it was," Blade said. "And I thought we could have shared it a little bit more, but that's what it's going to take. People are going to take Syd away, and Syd's going to find other kids, and we've got to knock some other shots down, and that's something we're going to focus on; it just can't be about one or two kids. Katelynne (Roberts) had a nice game, which was good to see, with the physicality of what East Side brings, but overall, I thought they did really well, but they were very unselfish and had some different looks. Que was very patient with her penetration but didn't finish some of it, but it was there. And that's good."

After a Maria Smith lay-in and a pair of Shakara McCline free throws opened the proceedings, the Tigers went on a 9-0 run, with Love, Elle Evans and Smith all scoring, and Harris draining a three to open up an 11-2 Tigers lead, forcing an East Side time out with 4:49 left in the period. McCline did break the run with a steal and score to make it 11-4, but then, Edwardsville got a three from Evans and a basket from Love sandwiched around Jailah Pelly basket to make it 16-6, with another basket from Harris and a banked home three at the buzzer from McCline making the score 18-9 for the Tigers after one.

A pair of free throws from Jamie Russell at the start of the second cut the Edwardsville lead to 18-11, but from there, the Tigers outscored the Flyers 12-2 for the remainder of the quarter, with Love hitting on a foul-line jumper and Kylie Burg and Macy Silvey hitting back-to-back threes to push the lead to 26-11. Another pair of Russell free throws made it 26-13, but Ariana Bennett scored off a good feed, and Love scored at the end of a fast break to give the Tigers a 30-13 lead at halftime.

Harris scored to open the second half, and Roberts added back-to-back baskets to give Edwardsville a 36-13 lead before Pelly banked home a three up top to put the Flyers on the board for the first time in the half. The two teams exchanged free throws before a basket inside from Harris made it 42-18. The teams exchanged baskets before another bank shot from Pelly cut the Tiger lead to 44-24 at the end of the third quarter.

The two teams exchanged baskets for the first half of the final quarter, and after a Flyer time out, Pelly hit a three on the side to make it 50-29, but Bennett converted a three-point play to make it 53-29, and after an exchange of baskets, East Side went on an 8-0 run late, with Pelly hitting back-to-back threes and Veronica Sherrod scoring inside to make the final 55-40 for the Tigers.

Beside Love and Harris, Bennett and Burg had seven points each, Roberts six points, Evans five, Smith four points and Silvey three. East Side was led by both McCline and Pelly, with 13 points each, while Sherrod had six points, Russell had four and Jamiya Brown and Tamia Hoskins had two points each.

The Tigers are now 14-1 overall and will meet up with O'Fallon in the front half of a girls-boys doubleheader Friday night, with the tip coming at 6 p.m., then play against Parkway North, who defeated Incarnate Word 61-43 Tuesday night, in a shootout at St. Joseph's Academy in St. Louis County Saturday afternoon in a 4 p.m. tip-off. Blade is looking ahead to both games, but it's also first things first.

"They shoot it," Blade said, referring to the Vikings. "But first and foremost is O'Fallon. That's going to be the big conference game, especially with the boys-girls doubleheader Friday night, and they're a handful. So, it's going to be a tough turnaround, but you

know what? You have to do that in the state tournament. So it's good preparation for us, and the set-up, it is what it is, no different than Incarnate on the third day in that tournament; it's tough to prepare when you go back-to-back-to-back. So they're awfully good, too, but we'll see, then turn around next week with some tough ones, too. But we've got to go one game at a time, and hopefully. we'll be a little bit more disciplined against O'Fallon Friday night, and see how that goes."



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