

Edwardsville Point Guards Jalil Roundtree and Caleb Valentine Play Big Part In Win Over Collinsville, Feel Confident In Final Three Games Of Season

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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COLLINSVILLE - Edwardsville junior point guards Jalil Roundtree and Caleb Valentine both played big roles in helping the Tigers to a big 38-36 Southwestern Conference road win over Collinsville at Vergil Fletcher Gym, as both helped hold Kahok forward Ray'Sean Taylor to 18 points in a great defensive effort.

Going into the game, Roundtree felt the game plan was to limit Taylor, widely regarded as one of the best players in the St. Louis area, and hit the boards against the Kahoks. currently ranked second in the Illinois Associated Press Class 4A state poll.

"Of course, obviously, limit Ray'Sean Taylor," Roundtree said in a joint postgame interview with Valentine. "And so, a lot goes into that. There's a person, of course, guarding him, the rest of the team have to play their part. And then, we've got to crash the boards, because they're big, also. So there's a lot you've got to worry about with them. They're a good team, and they're ranked second for a reason in the state."

And Edwardsville was able to execute its game plan very well to gain perhaps its biggest win of the season to date.

"Yeah, it's a big W for us," Roundtree said. "You know, a lot of people have doubted us, of course, from last year, and people just didn't think we'd come out the way we did, but we stuck to the game plan, and took care of business."

Valentine thought the Tigers used a Dec. 13 loss to Collinsville at Lucco-Jackson Gym 47-29 as a motivating factor.

"I think we were all frustrated from the way things ended the last time we played them," Valentine said. "We wanted revenge, and I feel like we're just showing everybody what we can do. To us, everybody doubted us and said we couldn't do this, and we couldn't do that. We're finally showing people that we're one of the best teams in the area."

Edwardsville has now won 11 games in a row and did it in one of the most difficult places to play in the Southwestern Conference, where every game is a battle. The Tigers play next at Alton Friday night, and Valentine knows his team will be set to go.

"No, it's next up," Valentine said with a smile. "You've got to stay competitive; that's what you want, though. It's the best conference in Illinois."

The game at Alton Friday night is a part of Edwardsville's final stretch, which also includes games next Tuesday at O'Fallon before finishing the regular season at home Feb. 28 against Belleville East. Valentine thinks the Tigers will be ready for the final stretch.

"I'm feeling confident," Valentine said. "I feel like they're all winnable games, in games, we just need to come out and compete, and play our best game. A lot of teams peak at the end of the season; I just think we need to keep getting better and keep playing as a team."

Roundtree was in complete agreement with Valentine.

"I agree with what Caleb said," Roundtree said. "Those are three very good teams, and we've just got to come out and play our best basketball, and make sure we finish strong if we can. We can't come this far, and not win those last three games. We've just got to finish off well."

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