



Senior Forward Gavin Reames Plays Key Role Off Bench For Tigers, Is Ready For A Big Postseason Run

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Gavin Reames, a senior forward for Edwardsville High School's boys basketball team, is usually one of the first players off the bench to give the Tigers a spark, and although he didn't score in Edwardsville's 48-45 win over Belleville East in both team's regular-season finale on Friday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym, Reames contributed some key defensive rebounds in helping the Tigers go on to the win.

Reames was one of six seniors, along with Ethan Young, Nic Hemken, Willie Thomas, Calen McKinney and Jack Nafziger who were honored, along with their families, in pregame ceremonies as part of the team's annual Senior Night, then helped hold off a Lancer comeback late to preserve the win.

"Yeah, it's amazing," Reames said in a postgame interview. "For me and the other seniors, it's always huge for us to win, then go into regionals with a bunch of confidence."

Junior Preston Weaver hit a pair of clutch three-point shots late to put the Tigers ahead 46-36 before East went on a 9-2 run near the end, with Hemken connecting on a pair of clutch free throws for the final margin before the buzzer. Reames gave credit to his teammates for their performances.

"It was amazing for (Weaver) to hit that shot," Reames said. "It was such a huge advantage for us. Preston making that helped us out so much, huge booster for our confidence, then to just keep fighting and keep putting them away."

Hemken coming up with the free throws after the Lancers cut the lead to 46-45 late was also a big play, and Reames agreed that it was a big feather in the team's caps to hold off the comeback.

"They're a tough team, super good," Reames said, "so it's always good to get a win, of course, at home on the last game, and for Nic to hit those free throws, it was huge."

The Tigers end the season with 12 wins in their final 14 games, including an 11-game winning streak, and host an IHSA Class 4A regional this week, with Edwardsville meeting Quincy in the opening game on Tuesday night. Reames feels the team's confidence is sky-high.

"We're flying right now," Reames said, "but we're not going to let that get to us. We're going stay prepared and get ready for Quincy, we're going to have three hard days of practice, and just get ready to get the Blue Devils."

The Quincy tradition is one of the best not just in Illinois, but in the entire nation, and to defeat a team of the Blue Devils' stature would be quite the accomplishment.

"Yeah, it would be huge for us," Reames said.

The Edwardsville-Quincy winner would then advance to Friday night's final against the winner of the first semifinal between Alton and O'Fallon, with the winner moving to the Pekin sectional against the winner of the Belleville East regional. Reames agreed that the Tigers could go very far in the tournament.

"Yeah, you never know," Reames said. "We'll see how far we can go."