

Junior Basketball Players Jalil Roundtree And Caleb Valentine Are First Community Credit Union Male Co-Athletes Of The Month For EHS

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COLLINSVILLE - Edwardsville High junior basketball point guards Jalil Roundtree and Caleb Valentine both played big roles in helping the Tigers during their 11-game winning streak that helped define their recent 23-10 basketball season, as the duo helped hold the opposition's top scorers in check, allowing Edwardsville the opportunity to win.

Such was the case on Feb. 18, when both Roundtree and Valentine held Collinsville's Ray'Sean Taylor, considered one of the best players in the St. Louis area, to 18 points as the Tigers scored their most significant win of the season, 38-36 over the Kahoks at Vergil Fletcher Gym. Roundtree felt the game plan was to limit Taylor and to aggressively rebound, which was a formula for success against Collinsville, who went on to the Class 4A sectional final against Normal Community West at Pekin before the remainder of the season was cancelled by the IHSA. When the Tigers took on Collinsville at that time, the Kahoks were ranked second in the Associated Press state poll.

For those efforts, and others throughout the season, both Roundtree and Valentine have been named Riverbender.com Co-male Athletes of the Month for March, 2020.

"Of course, obviously, limit Ray'Sean Taylor," Roundtree said in a joint postgame interview with Valentine of the key to the Collinsville game. "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.

"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's winning streak ended on Feb. 21 at Alton 43-40, but the Tigers eventually won 13 of their final 16 games, losing to O'Fallon in the regional final at

home on Mar. 6. But the Tigers faced each challenge along the way as a chance to improve, and the team worked hard to attain its goals and stayed competitive throughout the season, especially against the teams in the Southwestern Conference.

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