



A Team Player: Nic Hemken Will Have Precious Memories Of Time As Edwardsville Boys Basketball Star

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EDWARDSVILLE - Senior forward Nic Hemken finished his four-year basketball career in style on March 6 with a high point total of 11 points in a 48-42 loss to O'Fallon in the IHSA Class 4A regional final at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

Hemken and Edwardsville's team performance that night symbolized the Tigers' 2019-20 season. Edwardsville's boys went down fighting and playing hard for the entire game.

It's the kind of mentality that helped Edwardsville to a remarkable turnaround season, as the Tigers finished 23-10 after going 9-20 the season before.

"You know, I'm obviously a little sad, my last basketball game of my career," an upbeat Hemken said afterward. "I am so happy for everyone in here. I mean, coming back from

last year, a really down year, coach (Dustin) Battas') first year, we started to figure things out this year. As a team, we just really clicked, and I'm just so proud of everyone in here, and I love all my brothers, and we're just one big family here."

The Tigers fell behind 11-0 early on in their final game, but rallied back and came to within four late, but O'Fallon came up with key baskets and free throws to keep Edwardsville at bay. But the Tigers didn't go down easily, and kept clawing their way back in it.

"We never go down without a fight," Hemken said, "and we were down 11-0, but I had no doubt in my mind that our boys would come back swinging, and Jack (Nafziger) hit a three, and Preston (Weaver) hit a three, and we started kicking back into the game. The end result wasn't what we wanted, but we fought to the end, and that's the only way we know how to end stuff, so we just keep fighting."

Hemken had a great senior season, doing the work under the boards, getting the rebounds to start the Tigers' fast break, and doing what was needed to get things done. Each Tiger player knew what his role was, and executed it exceptionally well.

"Again, I'm just so proud of everyone on this team" Hemken said, "and we all have our roles. Coach (Battas) always talks about well we all know all our roles. And we've got some people who can score, we've got people that can pass, we got me, and take charges, rebound and defend. We all just kind of know our role, and whenever someone else isn't having their night, we just pick up the slack with someone else. So it's this next man up mentality, and no matter what, we're just always fighting in there. It doesn't matter whether the shots are falling or not, we're still in the game because we just try our butts off."

As far as Hemken's future goes, it involves baseball and college for next year.

"Well, I'm going to continue my college career," Hemken said. "I'm going to Truman State University (in Kirksville, Mo.) to play baseball, and I'm really excited about that."

When Hemken looks back at his time on the Tigers' basketball team, he'll see nothing but incredible memories.

"These four years have been the best four years of my life," Hemken said. "It's just awesome. I mean, I wish you guys could come just be around for a season to see how close we get together. I mean, we're here six, seven days a week, three, four hours a day. You gotta come close; our culture just doesn't allow you to not to come close. I made some great friendships and memories I'm going to remember for the rest of my life."