



Brennan Weller Pours In 26 Points, Preston Weaver 16, As Tigers Thrash Belleville West 59-49

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BELLEVILLE - Senior forward Brennan Weller had a game-high 26 points, while Preston Weaver added 16 points as the Edwardsville boys basketball team won their season opener 59-49 at Belleville West in a Southwestern Conference game played Saturday afternoon at the West gym.

The Tigers got off to a big start, and never looked back, leading from start to finish in their first game since last March.

"We got off to a good start in the first quarter, got the lead," said Edwardsville head coach Dustin Battas, "and were able to keep the lead the whole game."

The news that the Tigers, along with the rest of the Metro-East region, got the green light to play on Thursday after Region Four, which includes Madison, St. Clair and Monroe Counties, were dropped to Phase Four, which allows high risk sports to be played, had everyone excited and ready to go.

"Our guys were super excited to play," Battas said, "and we're really looking forward to have the opportunity to have a game."

Battas admitted that he was worried about how things would turn out, being allowed to play on such short notice and having limited practices. As things turned out, the Tigers' experience helped see them through.

"As a coach, I was worried about our conditioning," Battas said, "and getting acclimated to game speed. But we've have some experienced guys that have been through it before, and I think that helped."

Edwardsville did lead from wire-to-wire, holding leads of 16-11, 31-22 and 43-28 after the first three quarters, but the Maroons outscored the Tigers 21-16 in the final quarter, but could not come close as Edwardsville went on to their opening win.

The Tigers started four seniors - Weller, Weaver, Jalil Roundtree and Caleb Valentine - along with junior Shaun Pacette, and all did exceptionally well.

"We had a great team effort, and had solid contributions from all five," Battas said.

Besides Weller and Weaver's contributions on the scoreboard, Roundtree had eight points, while Valentine scored six points, Pacette had three points and Hersch Greene scored two points. J'luan Patterson led West with 16 points, Tommie Williams chipped in 13 points, Ty Lampley scored nine points, Dwight Newsome, Jr. had seven points, and Ruben Howell IV had four points.

The Tigers have their home opener on Tuesday night when they host O'Fallon, then play Belleville East Thursday night, also at home. Edwardsville then hosts East St. Louis on Feb. 16 to finish their home stand. And being out on the court and having games is very meaningful to Battas.

"Just having the opportunity to play is great," Battas said, "and getting the victory is an added bonus."