

# **Sydney Harris Paves Way For Tigers, Is i-CAN Clinic Female Athlete of Month For Edwardsville High School**

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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville girls basketball junior forward Sydney Harris took control of the game in the second quarter, scoring key baskets for the Tigers in going on to a game-high 26 points as Edwardsville won its long-awaited season opener 57-37 over Belleville West Saturday afternoon at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The start of the season was delayed because of the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, and on Thursday, the Metro-East region got the green light to begin playing basketball and other high-risk sports, and Harris, along with her teammates, were very happy to be back out on the floor.

Harris is the Riverbender.com Athlete of the Month for Edwardsville High School.

"It felt great," Harris said in a postgame interview. "It's what we've all been waiting for, and I know that all of us have been playing with our other teams, and stuff, and we had those elite games with our high school. But it's just different once you step on, and you put the Edwardsville jersey on, and it all comes back, and it feels great."

Harris took charge and control of the game with her second-quarter outburst to put the Tigers ahead to stay, and her leadership skills are going to be very important for the team this season.

"I've been told by coach (Cathy Happe) I just have to step up, and me being a junior, and us only having one senior. Katelynne (Roberts) can't do it all by herself, so she's told multiple juniors that we always have to help step up, and we all have to be leaders on this team. So that's what I'm trying to do."

Harris and the rest of her teammates were anxious to get the season started, and once the Tigers hit the floor, things felt great for her and the team.

"It felt great. It felt great," Harris said. "Couldn't wait any longer."

The pregame butterflies and nervousness were there with everyone, but once the game started, it turned out to be business as usual for the Tigers.

"Yeah, I'm not even going to lie," Harris said. "I had a bit of nervousness, and it's just because we just haven't had all the practices that we've had in past times, so it was just coming in and not being 100 percent prepared. It was a little ugly at first, but I mean, that's what's going to happen when we don't have all the practices that we need, but we came out with the win, so that's all we can really ask for."

It was Happe's first varsity game and win, and Harris was very happy for her new head coach.

"More to come," Harris said with a smile and laugh. "One of many."

Happe took over for longtime head coach Lori Blade after Blade announced her retirement over the summer, having won 510 games during her time as Tigers' head

coach. Harris is very confident and happy with her new head coach, and is very confident in her.

"Hey, maybe she'll get there," Harris said again with a smile. "Maybe she'll get there. I believe in her."

Harris didn't notice anything different with Happe as head coach than she was as an assistant to Blade in her first two years.

"I mean (Happe) was just as vocal as last year with coach Blade being an assistant coach," Harris said, "so I mean, her being the head coach, it's obviously going to be different, because coach Blade's not there. But it felt good. I like coach (Happe), and I like the way she coaches, so it's all good things."

Overall, Harris is very happy to be back on the court for the Tigers after almost a year's absence, and to everyone, it was a big relief to be back as well.

"Yeah, it definitely was a relief," Harris said. "There was some doubt in the back of my mind that we weren't going to be able to play, and a lot of people I know thought that too. So, it felt good. We only got, I don't know, like six practices, we only got two contact days, so coming in with only two contact practices, and then, being able to play, it's crazy, but it feels good."

As far as the abbreviated season, one without a state tournament series this year goes, Harris is very hopeful that the Tigers and the rest of the area get their entire season in without interruption.

"I know they're saying we're not supposed to have state this year," Harris said, "but we're only getting 15 games, but I mean, 15 games is better than nothing. So, we just have to hope that we get to play those 15 games, and we don't get shut down or anything."

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