

Belleville East Defeats Edwardsville's Basketball Boys 48-37, Weller Leads Tigers With 11, James Adds 8, Roundtree 6

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Belleville East started the game off with a 12-1 run before Edwardsville rallied to take the halftime lead, but a 7-0 run at the end of the third quarter gave the momentum back to the Lancers as East went on to a 48-37 Southwestern Conference boys basketball win Thursday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The momentum swung around both ways during the game, but the Lancers were able to get on the late third quarter run to cut the Tigers' lead to 33-31, then outscored Edwardsville 17-6 in the final period to take the win.

"I thought our guys did a lot of things well," said Tigers' coach Dustin Battas. "We seemed like we ran out of gas a little bit, having a game on Tuesday, and our guys trying to get in shape as fast as they can, and I think some of our guys logged a lot of minutes, and we were hurting a little bit down the stretch. But we're not going to make excuses, we're going to keep practicing. We had a really hard time making baskets in the second half, I thought we executed things pretty well, some rimmed out on us, and they made a couple of tough threes at the end of the third quarter and cut into the lead; I thought that was like a big momentum swing. And same thing in the fourth quarter, I felt like we executed some things well, we just had some threes that rimmed in and out, and they made their free throws down the stretch, and they're hard to play against."

The Tigers came back very nicely from a 12-1 deficit in the first quarter to cut the East lead to five, then took the lead going into the interval.

"Yeah, I thought our guys bounced back from a tough start," Battas said. "We just had trouble making baskets initially. I think some of that is their athleticism and their length. It made it hard initially. I think our guys settled in and got adjusted, we started screening and cutting better, then got the lead, changed our defense up a couple of time to try and protect some guys in foul trouble, and give them a different look, and that was successful. At the end of the day, they're really good. We think we're good too, we just missed a few shots there we usually make. So we look forward to getting to see them down the road."

Both teams played well, and it was the last momentum swing that eventually decided the game in favor of the Lancers. The Tigers hung in well, and worked hard the entire game, which is a source of pride to the team.

"Our guys take a lot of pride in preparation," Battas said. "We practiced good yesterday, they're not going to quit. We take a lot of pride in what we do. I think a lot of it came down to making baskets. We scored 14 points in the second quarter, and only scored 13 the whole second half. So that's in our league, that's really tough, because you're playing good teams with good players. So we'll just try to do a better job on offense, executing a little bit, getting our guys some repetitions on some things we can fix on offense, but I'm

not questioning our guys' effort. They certainly want to do well, and it certainly means a lot to them. So we'll be back. We'll practice good this week, and compete next week."

Z.J. Hamilton started the scoring off with a driving basket to give East the first lead at 2-0, and after a Jalil Roundtree free throw, the Lancers reeled off the next 10 points, with a three from Jordan Pickett, free throws from Bryson Ivy and Ethyn Brown and a basket from Alan Mason to take a 12-1 lead, forcing an Edwardsville time out. Brennan Weller hit a three coming out to cut the lead, and after another East free throw, Weller and Gabe James hit consecutive threes, sandwiched around a Hamilton runner in the lane, to cut the Lancer lead to 15-10 after the first quarter.

After an exchange of baskets to start the second quarter, a three-point play from Weller cut the East lead to 17-15, and James hit a baseline three to give the Tigers their first lead at 18-17. East countered with a basket, and after a Roundtree free throw tied the score at 19-19, free throws from Preston Weaver and a Weller three-point play gave Edwardsville a 24-19 lead. A pair of Brown free throws cut the Tiger lead to 24-21 at halftime.

The Tigers opened the second half by going on a 9-2 run, with baskets from Shaun Pacette, a three from Weaver and a driving lay-in by Roundtree to give Edwardsville a 33-23 lead. The Lancers had some very good looks at the basket during that time, but couldn't convert on their chances. Brown then hit a three from the top of the key to cut the lead to 33-26, and it sparked East to go on the 7-0 run, getting another three up top from Pickett and a basket in the lane from Ivy to cut the Edwardsville lead to 33-31 at the end of the third.

A Brown free throw early in the fourth cut the lead to 33-32, then a three from Ivy gave East the lead for good at 35-33. Another Brown basket and a free throw from Pickett upped the advantage to 38-33, and from there, the Lancers went six-of-10 from the free throw line, along with getting key baskets from Alan Mason and Hamilton to take the 48-37 win.



Weller led the Tigers with 11 points, while James had eight points, Roundtree had six, Weaver scored five, Pacette four and Ryan Hampton had two points.

The Lancers leading scorer was Brown, who had 14 points, while Pickett had 12 points, Hamilton had nine points, Ivy scored seven points and Mason scored six points.

The Tigers are now 2-1 on the year and have the weekend off before hosting East St. Louis Tuesday night in a game that starts at 7:30 p.m. The schedule won't be getting easier for Edwardsville, but Battas knows that his team will be well-prepared to face the Flyers.

"Definitely does not get any easier," Battas said. "East St. Louis awaits on Tuesday; they'll be good. And like I said, we don't have a bunch of time, we've got a lot of games in a short amount of time. So we'll maximize our practice time, and try to get better every day. And even though it's a six-week season, if you take it day-by-day, there's a lot of opportunity there to get better. So we'll be looking forward to practice, and trying to play our best game on Tuesday."





[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)