

Tigers Get 20 From Harris, Go On 11-2 First-Quarter Run To Defeat Highland, Prepare For Rematch With O'Fallon

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Junior forward Sydney Harris scored 20 points and Edwardsville went on an 11-2 run following the first-quarter COVID time out in going on to defeat Highland 56-43 in a non-conference girls basketball game played Monday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Bulldogs are also one of the Metro-East's better teams, and Tigers' coach Caty Happe knew that Highland was a high quality opponent that would give her team a good challenge.

"Very quality opponent," Happe said. "They put some pressure on us, through our guards, got some turnovers. I thought they did a great job battling, and our kids never gave up. We got pushed around a little bit, but it's important that, when they get knocked down, they keep getting back up, and that's what they're doing."

Even when the lead stayed in double digits, the Bulldogs kept fighting and playing hard, a very high testament to Highland head coach Clint Hamilton.

"Correct," Happe said. "It was a 15-point game for the majority of the third and fourth quarter, but it felt like a three-point game the way he was coaching them, and the way they played. Definitely a good game to keep pressure on us, and make us to continue to run our offense and do the things we need to to be a good team."

The sophomores on the roster came off the bench to provide quality minutes, which was also good to see.

"Good to see them," Happe said, "because we're going to need them down the stretch. They did some really good things and gave us some minutes that we definitely need breaks for."

The main goal in the game was to get better, and the Tigers definitely met their goal in the game.

"Absolutely," Happe said. "I told them going in that win-lose, we want to get better from this. And I think Highland made us better tonight.. So, that's what we want to do, and continue to improve every single game."

One sophomore who's come off the bench and provided good play has been Emerson Weller, who had six points on the night and made some very good plays.

"Yep, doing some good things," Happe said. "So I thought she did a good job coming off the bench tonight, and giving a little bit of energy."

The game started out a bit physical, and defense dominated the proceedings until Harris hit a three for the game's first basket. A free throw from Macy Silvey and another Harris basket upped the Tiger lead to 6-0 before a three from Liv Wilke cut the lead in half to 6-3, with a pair of free throws from Bella LaPorta making the score 6-5. The teams traded baskets before the first quarter COVID time out with 4:05 left in the period, and from there, a pair of baskets from Harris, a nice move in the paint by Weller that led to a score and a Harris three opened up a 17-7 Edwardsville lead. LaPorta and Katelynne Roberts exchanged baskets before the end of the period, making the score 19-9 for the Tigers after one.

A Wilke steal and score opened the second period for the Bulldogs, but a free throw from Ariana Bennett and a Harris basket gave Edwardsville a 22-11 lead. The teams exchanged points before the second COVID time out, then free throws from Liv and

Grace Wilke cut the Tiger lead to 24-17, with a pair of Kaitlyn Morningstar free throws and baskets from Weller and Silvey giving Edwardsville a 30-17 edge. A free throw by Abby Huelsmann made the score 30-18 Tigers at the interval.

Baskets from Elle Evans and Weller at the start of the second half increased the Tiger lead to 34-18, and after a drive through the lane by Liv Wilke made it 34-20, free throws from Harris, a baseline drive from Silvey and free throws from Evans doubled the Tiger lead to 40-20. Highland kept coming, and a three from Grace Wilke and a LaPorta basket cut the lead to 41-25 before a Harris basket at the buzzer made the score 43-25 after three quarters.

The fourth quarter started out evenly before LaPorta hit a three up top to cut the Edwardsville lead to 45-31, and eventually cut the lead to 51-39, thanks to the efforts of Liv Wilke and LaPorta. It was as close as the Bulldogs would get, as the Tigers went on to their 56-43 win.

Harris led the way for the Tigers with her 20 points, while Evans and Silvey both had nine points, Weller had six points, Roberts scored five points, Morningstar scored four points and Ariana Bennett had three. Liv Wilke led Highland with 17 points, while LaPorta scored 14, Grace Wilke scored seven, Huelsmann had three points and both Krista Rittenhouse and Kirsten Taylor scored two points each.

The Tigers are now 10-0 on the year, and have a rematch against O'Fallon, whom Edwardsville defeated in a 67-62 overtime thriller last Thursday night, at the OTHS Panther Dome Wednesday night. Happe knows her team will be ready to go for the return match.

"Quick turnaround, so some things to look out for tomorrow," Happe said. "But we play another day."







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