

Weller Leads Tigers With 18 Points, Weaver Adds 14 As Edwardsville Defeats East St. Louis 55-43

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March 5 2021 6:07 AM





EAST ST. LOUIS - Brennan Weller's 18 points and 11 rebounds, along with Preston Weaver's 14 points and Shaun Pacette's eight rebounds, helped Edwardsville to a 55-43 win over East St. Louis in a Southwestern Conference boys basketball game played Thursday night at the East St. Louis gym.

The Tigers got off to a brilliant start, getting good looks in the first half, and hit on six threes in the opening 16 minutes.

"The guys were awesome," said Edwardsville head coach Dustin Battas. "It was a great team effort, and a great team win."

Unlike the first game, a 53-44 overtime win at home last month, the Tigers had two days to prepare for the Flyers, and the preparation helped make a difference.

"I think this time, we had a couple of practices first," Battas said, "so this time, I think our defense was better."

The practice time is paying important dividends for Edwardsville, as the team may be starting to peak at the right time.

"I think our guys are starting to play their best basketball at the right time," Battas said. "We executed a lot of things well on offense, and we were able to get open shots."

Edwardsville was also able to withstand the high-pressure defense from the Flyers,

"We handled their pressure well," Battas said, "our guard play was outstanding, and we fought for every rebound. Our guys played with a lot of heart, and a lot of mental fortitude."

The Tigers led after one quarter 16-8, then upped the lead to 32-22 at halftime, then to 42-27 after three quarters, with East Side outscoring Edwardsville 17-11 in the final period, but the Tigers going on to their first win at the Flyers' gym since 2017.

Christian Jones led the Flyers with 17 points.

The Tigers are now 9-2 on the year and finish the regular season at home with games against Collinsville Saturday afternoon and their Senior Night game Tuesday night against Alton. Battas is very proud of his team, and knows that the players will work hard to get better before next week's Southwestern Conference tournament, with the Tigers guaranteed to have at least one home game.

"This is a special group, and we're glad we get to coach them," Battas said. "We just want to stay healthy and get better every day."