

Historic Defensive Effort: Edwardsville Boys Topple Collinsville 51-19, Lowest Point Total For Kahoks Since World War II Era

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville High boys basketball team has prided itself on playing good defense all season, but on Saturday afternoon at Lucco-Jackson Gym, the defensive effort was historic.

The Tigers held Collinsville to only one basket and six points in the first half in going on to a 51-19 win over the Kahoks, the lowest point total a Collinsville team had scored since 1944, and the fewest points allowed by Edwardsville against Collinsville since 1940.

Edwardsville's defense against the Kahoks, which also includes a 48-26 win at Vergil Fletcher Gym on Feb. 18, was very tight in both games, and Tigers' coach Dustin Battas was very proud of the effort on Saturday.

"I don't want to take it for granted, because I realize all the preparation and the work these guys do in practice to get that accomplished," Battas said, "but it just says a lot about how smart our guys are, and how hard they try. We've got a lot of respect for Collinsville; coach (Darin) Lee's gonna win a whole bunch of games by the time he retires, and has a good program. So it's not an easy feat."

The Kahoks ran their offense well, but couldn't find a good shot, and when they had good looks, couldn't convert on the chances.

"I just thought we took away some of their main options that they want to do," Battas said, "and then, you've got to go to their third or fourth option, and maybe, that kid is not as comfortable in that role, and you're able to disrupt them. It's just been a good team effort all year, and for some reason, we seem to have good match-ups against them with our personnel, I guess. First of all, it all starts in practice. We try to guard their offense, to guard their plays, and the defense is really how smart are your guys, and how hard they try. Certainly, our guys try hard, and have been really engaged in defensive preparation, and have been able to carry it over to the game. A part of our defense is not turning the ball over and lose the ball quick. One of the hardest things to guard is transition. And so, if we score and get a good shot at the basket, we're able to set our defense every time. That also aids our defense, and it's also a combination of our offense in a way. That's allowed us to put these great defensive games together."

A good defense is a trademark of the Tigers, going back to when Mike Waldo coached the Tigers to very successful seasons.

"Yes, and I took a lot of that from coach Waldo," Battas said. "A lot of our principles on defense, obviously, because he was a brilliant defensive coach. But that can always be consistent. You don't have to have the biggest, fastest, strongest guy to be good on defense. Offense sometimes comes down to having some players here and there, but defense, I think, can be a consistency every year in a program, regardless if you have big guys, short guys, fast guys, slow guys. So we always hang our hat on that, just to know that gives us a chance. In our league (the Southwestern Conference), the players we play against are so good, that you don't spend time on defense, you can get down on it, but they've been a big part of our program for the last 16 years I've been here."



The Tigers were able to get going offensively on a pair of threes from senior guard Caleb Valentine in the opening period.

"Caleb's been outstanding for us all year," Battas said. "I've mentioned it before, but he really changes his role and changes his game to fit what we want him to do on offense. And he's good at driving at the basket, but we needed more guys that can shoot threes to create space, and he's shooting hundreds of shots every day. So I'm just happy he's getting the rewards for all that hard work. We have a lot of confidence in Caleb making threes."

Edwardsville started the game with a 9-0 run with a basket from Brennan Weller and a three from Valentine that made it 5-0 before the initial COVID time out. Preston Weaver and Jalil Roundtree then scored back-to-back baskets to make it 9-0 before Travion Swygeart hit a pair of free throws to make it 9-2. Shaun Pacette and Jackson Lee then traded baskets before a three from Valentine made it 14-4 Edwardsville after one quarter.

The Tigers then started the second quarter on a 7-0 run, with a basket from Ryan Hampton and a three from Gabe James pushing Edwardsville to a 19-4 lead, forcing a Collinsville time out. Hayden Moore then scored off a nice dish before a pair of free

throws from Josh Chambers made the score 21-6. Weller scored before the buzzer to give the Tigers a 23-6 lead at halftime.

A Preston Weaver basket, a Roundtree free throw and another basket from another basket from Valentine made it 28-6 before a basket from Swygeart with 4:30 left in the quarter made it 28-8, the Kahoks' first basket since the opening quarter. A three-point play from Weller made it 31-8, with Collinsville going on 6-- run behind baskets from Devin Davis, Swygeart and Nate Hall to cut the lead to 31-14. Weller then hit a pair of free throws following a technical foul against the Kahoks, and a free throw from Nick Graf made the score 33-15 Tigers at three quarter time.

James and Roundtree opened the fourth quarter with baskets off steals to give Edwardsville a 37-15 advantage, and from there, the Tigers outscored the Kahoks 14-4 to give Edwardsville its 51-19 win.

Edwardsville is now 10-2 on the season, and has clinched the number two seed in next week's Southwestern Conference postseason tournament. The Tigers will finish the regular season with their Senior Night game against Alton Tuesday night, then host the first quarterfinal game Thursday night against the number seven seed. A win advances the Tigers to a Friday night semifinal game, and the final will be played at the highest remaining seed next Saturday. Battas is looking ahead to the final week of the shortened season.

"Yes, it's exciting to have the opportunity to practice with our guys," Battas said. "It's a little bit sad to think about having one more week with them, so we'll block that out, and just do the best we can. Our guys are looking forward to Tuesday, being honored for Senior Night, then competing in our conference tournament, which obviously will be a big challenge and a big task. We're obviously happy with the work we've done so far this season, and we've just like to end it on a positive note."



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