



Edwardsville Defeats Belleville East 25-15, 25-15, Moves To SWC Girls Volleyball Final Against O'Fallon

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
April 8 2021 6:10 AM





EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville High girls volleyball team took another big step towards a Southwestern Conference championship by putting together another big team effort as the Tigers defeated Belleville East in the first semifinal of the conference tournament 25-15, 25-15 Wednesday evening at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

With the win, the top-seeded Tigers will host third-seed O'Fallon, a 25-12, 24-26, 25-13 winner at second-seeded Belleville West, in the final tonight. And has been the case all season, it was a total team effort that put Edwardsville in the final.

"With Belleville East coming in as the only team so far that has taken a set from us, the stakes were a little high," said Tigers' head coach Heather Ohlau. "They were coming off a big three-set win against Collinsville as the underdog, so they were coming in here with nothing to lose. And we had a target on our back, just due to being the number one seed. So for our girls to come out and perform once again is all we can ask for."

The Tigers bounced back well from losing an early first set lead to trail the Lancers, causing Edwardsville to call time out, and were able to take back and extend a lead exceptionally well, a far cry from their regular season match, where the Tigers won in three sets.

"I think we came out a little bit more on fire," Ohlau said, "I think we were a little bit more focused, both on offense and defense, and that showed. Our block was pretty solid, our defense was digging the balls that got past our blocks, so it was just a nice thing to see."

The Tigers once again had a solid team performance, led by senior Alexa Harris, who had five kills and seven digs on the match, and many of the younger players on the team that stepped up when injuries cropped up.

"Yeah, with the caliber of players that we have, it was pretty nice that we were able to mix it up," Ohlau said, "and have a variety of performances from all players."

The Tigers took a 6-3 lead early on in the opening set, only to see the Lancers come back to take an 8-7 lead that forced Edwardsville to use its first time out of the set. After the time out, Harris served up four points in a row, backed by a combined block from Storm Suhre and Sydney Davis to give the Tigers a 12-8 lead. After an exchange of points that brought the score to 15-11 for Edwardsville, Lexie Griffin served up two straight points to make it 17-11, after another exchange that brought the score to 21-15, Morgan Tulacro served up the set's final four points, with an ace making the final score 25-15 to put the Tigers one set up.

East jumped out to an early 3-1 lead at the start of the second set, but the Tigers were able to bounce back to tie it up at 3-3, then scored the next four points in a row to take a 7-3 lead, forcing a Lancer time out. Cami Augustine got the ball back for East on a nice tip shot to make it 7-4, but a combined block from Maddie Grimes and Griffin got the ball back for Edwardsville at 8-4, and after an exchange that made it 9-5, East was able to score four of the next five points to pull within 10-9 as Hannah Mueth had back-to-back kills during the stretch. Davis got the ball back for the Tigers on a nice shot, but another exchange brought the Lancers back to within 12-11, causing an Edwardsville time out. Davis delivered another kill to give the ball back to the Tigers, and then served up back-to-back points to make it 15-11. Another exchange made it 16-12, then Rihanna Huebner served up three straight points, aided by a thundering kill from Harris and a nicely placed dig by Huebner to make it 19-12. Another exchange brought the score to 21-14, and the Tigers scored four of the match's final five points, with a Lancer spike going long to give Edwardsville the 25-15 win to take the set and match.

The Tigers and Panthers will play each other in the final tonight in a match that is set to start at 6 p.m., and Ohlau knows that her team will be ready to go.

"I think, again, we're going to have a target on our back," Ohlau said. "Both teams are looking to take us down once again, so it's up to our girls to perform and win it."

With the IHSA postseason cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the conference tournament being serving as the postseason, bringing home the SWC crown would mean a lot to the Tigers, not just the girls volleyball program, but to the school's entire athletic program.

"With it being our last game no matter what, I think for the seniors, it'll be a nice closure to the season," Ohlau said, "knowing that we won our conference, and just overall, being able to be the top team in the conference, along with a lot of the other sports from our school, like being able to say that Edwardsville is the number one team in our conference. Just hope that we're ready to go tomorrow."





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