

Tigers-Redbirds Have Competitive SWC Volleyball Match, Tigers Win In Two

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
September 15 2021 5:16 PM





EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville High girls' volleyball team went on a big run in the opening set of their match, outscoring Alton 15-1 after the Redbirds pulled to within 10-9, then did the same in the second set, outscoring Alton 17-6 after an 8-8 time to defeat the Redbirds 25-11, 25-16 in a Southwestern Conference match played Tuesday at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Redbirds are a very much improved team and played well, but the Tigers came up with key plays to keep Alton at bay.

"Yeah, they were digging really well," said Edwardsville head coach Heather Ohlau. "Alton's defense was able to keep the ball up in several situations, so their defense helps better our players by trying to hit where they weren't."

Still, the Tigers kept going, with Sydney Harris at one point in the first set scoring three points in a row with some very alert plays.

"Sydney adds some athleticism to the front row in the middle," Ohlau said. "She's able to read and adjust, and just shows her athleticism as she's playing the ball."

The Tigers were coming off a fifth-place finish in the Crossroads Classic in Effingham last weekend, going 3-2 with some very good wins, but the team just as easily could

have gone 5-0. The showing still gave the team good momentum going in the match on Tuesday.

"A couple of those matches we'd like to take back, against Plainfield North and always, our rival, (Breese) Mater Dei (Catholic)," Ohlau said. "But we learned from that, so we were able to finish the tournament with two key wins after taking two straight losses. So it just shows this team's perseverance whenever things go down, just to be able to bounce back and learn from it."





The lessons learned from the two losses in Effingham helped formed the Tigers' mindset going into the match against the Redbirds.

"Every game that you play, you want to get better," Ohlau said. "You want to see that improvement, you want to see the cleanness of the plays and just taking care of the ball on your side. So, this match helped us to see that a little better."

Alton head girls volleyball coach Dan Carter was very proud of his team for the way they kept going and never gave up against the Tigers.

"That's exactly what I told the girls," Carter said. "I know it's disappointing, the girls want to come out and win. But I just told them, I said this is probably that all the way they played, that's potentially the conference champions. It's early in the conference, but they've got the kind of talent to win this conference. This conference is always good, and we played with them at times.

"I know it's frustrating to say we just played with them at times. Times, we didn't, and that's what I reminded them of. We showed we had the potential of playing with good teams, but you've got to do it, not just in little stretches, you've got to do it for the whole match. And that's something we're going to have to get better at, to work on.

"The other thing we talk about is it's tough for us to prepare for a team like this when we don't have players on our own team to go up against. We haven't had practice for a week now, because we've been playing games, which is all great. But tomorrow night, we've got practice, and we're going to do some things differently to prepare a little bit more next time we see them. It's kind of quick offense with these players. I knew this was coming, and we just didn't have the opportunity to really get prepared as much as maybe we can for next time."

The Redbirds have been playing short-handed due to injuries, which has forced their hand a bit. The team continues to hand tough and play hard.

"We're very short, but we do have Grace Carter, my daughter, who's in the back row who has an injury," Carter said, "so we're running a five-one versus a six-two, which at times has been really good for us. But you all see, at times, where it's a disadvantage to us. But no, we've got what we've got, and we're going to get better at it."

Alton had some momentum of their own as well, coming off a third-place finish in their own invitational tournament that was held last weekend as well. in the midst of a great comeback season so far, and Carter is highly pleased with his team's progress.

"You know, I think we've got six wins already on the year, we played very well in our own tournament, and we played very well throughout the season," Carter said. "Even tonight, you saw it. We're doing a lot of things right, and we're working on things, and we're going to keep getting better. That's what I challenged the girls every night. We're going to be better tomorrow than we were today, and that's what we want. Keep coming at them every day, and we're going to take some things from tonight's match that we didn't do well, and we're going to work on that, and we're going to work on some things they did well against us, and try to get ready for them for next time."

The Edwardsville-Alton girls volleyball match opening set started out with the Tigers taking three of the first four points, and five of the first eight. Edwardsville started to get some momentum going on kills by Emma Garner and Ava Waltenberger to go ahead 7-3, and after an exchange of points, Alton, with Ella Artis serving, scored three to cut the lead to 8-6. With the Tigers up 10-7, a pair of points from Alyssa Wisniewski's service cut the lead to 10-9, forcing an Edwardsville time out. After the time out, the Tigers took control, scoring five in a row behind alert plays from Harris and Sydney Davis to take a 15-9 lead, with Alton calling time out. The Redbirds broke the momentum with a point of their own to make it 15-10, but then Edwardsville, behind Kaitlyn Conway's service and good plays from Waltenberger and Garner, scored 10 of the set's final 11 points to win 25-11 and take a one-set lead in the match.

The second set started out much the same, as the teams exchanged points to start with the Tigers eventually 6-3. Taryn Wallace served up a point to make it 6-5, and eventually, Reese Plont served the point that brought Alton into a 7-7 tie. After an exchange made it 8-8, the Tigers went on a run once again, outscoring the Redbirds 7-3 to make it 15-11, then ran off five points in a row to make it 20-11. Alton hung tough and managed to cut the lead to 21-13, but the Tigers then scored four of the set's final seven points, with Maddie Vieth serving out the match to take the second set 25-16 and the match in two straight sets.

The Redbirds are now 6-5 on the year and host Collinsville Thursday at the Redbirds Nest in a 5:45 p.m. start before playing in a tournament at Orchard Farm, Mo., this weekend. Carter feels that his team is on the right track, and will continue to work hard to win their matches.

"I would say, all in all, we're where we want to be," Carter said. "Obviously, you want to get wins, but more importantly, we want to get better. So we're going to take a chance and work on what we got here today, and get a little bit better tomorrow. We have practice tomorrow, we're going to get kids in the gym and we'll get to work I'm very pleased with the girls, we've got some great senior leaders out there for us, and they'll keep us together, and we'll be alright."

The Tigers go to 11-3 on the year, and play four of their next five matches on the road, starting with trips to Belleville Althoff Catholic and Belleville West next week, and an upcoming match at Cor Jesu Academy in Affton, Mo., along with a home meeting with O'Fallon as well. Ohlau feels that the team is going along well, and knows that they'll be set to go.

"Absolutely," Ohlau said. "I think that everybody's geared in, and their focus is on the team and what we need to do to prolong the season as much as possible. I'm proud of these girls and what they're doing each day in the gym."



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