



Celebrate Seniors: Tigers Face Tough Competition In Annual Southern Illinois Duals Invitational, Win Two Of Three

by Brandon Harris

September 26 2021 3:36 PM





EDWARDSVILLE – On Friday, September 24, and Saturday, September 25, the Edwardsville Tigers hosted their annual Southern Illinois Duals Invitational and celebrated their team's Senior Night. The tournament saw competitors like Normal, Quincy, and powerhouse Columbia-Rockbridge visit Edwardsville over the pleasant fall weekend.

The Tigers beat Normal and Quincy on Senior Night but fell short of a perfect weekend with a tough 6-3 team loss to Rockbridge on Saturday morning.

“We had two great matches against Normal High School and Quincy High School, but this morning we came out and played a good Rockbridge team. Friday was highlighted by senior night, which is always an emotional night for the players, kids, and their parents,” Edwardsville Head Girls Tennis Coach Dave Lipe said.

The Lady Tigers would give their best effort all weekend despite the emotions of senior night and the physical toll of three matches in one weekend.

“I think we competed really and had strong wins all weekend,” Coach Lipe said. “Today, we had wins against Rockbridge at number four doubles, six singles, two singles, and we had some of our girls play the best tennis of the year.”



The Tigers were undefeated in last year's COVID-19 bubble. Due to schedules returning to normal, the Tigers' schedule has gotten more competitive, and a handful of losses seeped in. One of the Tigers' losses was against Chloe Koons at number one singles with a final score of 7-6 (7-5), 6-2. "Chloe ran into a girl with a lot of confidence and had tough singles match against Rockbridge. Congratulations to her for pulling out the win and Chloe will gather herself and move on," said Lipe.

On top of more competitive teams to play, new playing formats have come into the mix this Tiger season. Dual matches from years past would see 3 doubles teams and 2 singles players going head-to-head to reach four match wins. Recently, the playing format has transferred to three, doubles matches and six, singles matches with teams trying to reach five wins. A change that Edwardsville's head coach believes will be good for his players in the long run.

"I think it's great that all our girls played singles and doubles today," Coach Lipe said. "I prefer this to the events where you are playing either singles or doubles. I would rather continue to give kids chances to play both. I see a lot of growth for someone like Hannah Colbert in her singles match. Normally, she plays so many doubles that she does not get a chance to play singles. This weekend, she played a lot of singles and by her last match, I think she played the best singles match of her career."

Colbert finished with one of the two Tiger victories thanks to her 6-2, 6-4 win at number two singles.

When good teams go head-to-head, they usually expose areas of improvement for their opponents. According to Lipe, “we saw things this weekend that we need to improve; not just today but also yesterday. Normal has strong number one singles and number one doubles. When you do player the better teams, they do expose the next things that one needs to work and this weekend, it was obvious.”

However, one thing that makes the Edwardsville head coach the winningest coach in the Southwestern Conference is how proactive the Tigers are as a team when getting better.

Some Tigers' weaknesses were taken advantage of this weekend, but that is not to say the Tigers were not already working on getting better at them. Lipe said: “I think we have may have regressed in a couple of spots on certain things. Sometimes when you work on things, you regress for a little, so I am okay with that because I think, in the long run, it'll pay dividends.”

Team player successes and results are often in the spotlight, but where would those players be without a solid coaching staff? Lipe does not know just how good his team is, but he also knows how high quality of a coaching staff the Tigers are lucky to have. “You look around and you see Kirk Schlueter, Jonathan Koons, Emily Cimarolli, Paul Stuart, and all these coaches who are perfectly positive with these kids. I told all of them that I appreciate their hard work and their professionalism.”

Looking forward, the Tigers have just the Chicago Lockport Invitational and matches against Collinsville and Waterloo before the Southwestern Conference Tournament. The Tigers hope their match play, returning dividends from working on areas of improvement, and superior coaching staff can push Edwardsville to their 14th Southwestern Conference Championship in 2021.

“I hope that the preparation we get from matches like this is prodigious for the conference tournament. These are not just matches, they are matches against good competition,” Coach Lipe concluded.





