

Tigers challenge East St. Louis in 57-40 home loss

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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The East St. Louis Flyers used a big second half run to down the Edwardsville Tigers 57-40 in Edwardsville on Tuesday night.

The win catapults the Flyers into first place in the Southwestern Conference at 5-0 and 9-4 overall. The Tigers drop to 8-5 and 4-1 in the SWC.

“I thought we did a lot to execute,” Edwardsville head coach Mike Waldo said. “I’m not displeased at all by the way we played.”

Highly touted 6’11” sophomore Jeremiah Tillmon was held to eight points, but Junior Karon Randolph of East St. Louis led all scorers with 14 points and chipped in two three-pointers. Going into the game he had made only three treys all season, and it came as a surprise to the Edwardsville coaching staff.

“With our scheme of defense that’s the shot we were giving him and he made them,” Waldo said. “It wasn’t the players’ fault, it was the coaches’ fault.”

A.J. Epenesa led the Tigers with 12 points and was a big reason Tillmon did not have a big night offensively.

“I think A.J. is getting better every game,” Waldo said. I think he will just continue to do that.”

The game started off nicely for Edwardsville. They got out to a 9-4 lead that was highlighted by a stunning alley-hoop dunk by Epenesa. The Flyers responded quickly but trailed 12-9 after the first quarter. Both teams played even basketball all the way to halftime. Oliver Stephen of Edwardsville made a three-pointer at the buzzer to give his team a slim 20-18 lead.

It was 24-22 Edwardsville two minutes into the third quarter when East St. Louis went on an astounding 29-8 run until late in the fourth quarter. During that time the Tigers were not making their open shots.

“Us missing some open shots and them making a couple of shots in that stretch helped them get in front of us.” Waldo said.

The Tigers hope to end their 3-game losing skid when they host O’Fallon at 7:30 p.m. this Friday. Coach Waldo likes where his team is right now.

“We have shown steady improvement,” Waldo said. “Our league is hard and every game is hard and we just have to prepare.”