

# Franklin leads Panthers past Tigers 58-40

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** – Edwardsville knew going into their Southwestern Conference game Friday night that O'Fallon's Donovan Franklin was going to be a handful.

Franklin, a 6-5 senior guard, proved to be that – and a lot more, scoring a game-high 26 points as the Panthers handed the Tigers their second straight loss, a 59-40 decision at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

“He's hard to stop,” said Tiger coach Mike Waldo of Franklin. “He can score inside, mid-range and from outside; he's very skilled. They put him in a lot of good positions to succeed.”

The game turned on a 10-0 second-quarter run by the Panthers, who jumped to a 20-10 lead and never looked back.

“Once they got us down, they did a lot of things,” Waldo said. “They have some really speedy kids and it's hard to chase them down. I thought our defense played fairly well; O'Fallon did a lot of things well, they played excellent ball.”

Edwardsville's been one of the top teams in the SWC for many years; going into their building and getting a win is very difficult, which left Panther coach Rick Gibson pretty happy.

“It's tough to come here and win,” Gibson said. “We played a complete game tonight; we didn't let them get into a rhythm and let them get backdoor baskets or many three-pointers. The three-pointers they did get, we had a hand in their face.

“They have guys that are very hard to guard, but we executed really well.”

Edwardsville led only once in the game, an 8-7 lead when Mark Smith drained a three-ball with 2:59 left in the first term. Other than that, the Panthers had the better of the play, The decisive 10-point run started with a Parker Roustio triple to put OTHS back up at 10-8 before AJ Epenesa canned a pair of free throws to tie it at 10-10. Chance Armstrong then hit a pair of foul shots to make it 12-10 at quarter time, with Franklin and Armstrong knocking down baskets and free throws to get the Panthers up 20-10 midway through the second.

Edwardsville tried to get back in it, getting it to 26-19 at halftime when Smith hit from behind the arc at the siren, but O'Fallon just kept pounding the ball and hitting open shots. The Tigers could never make a run at the Panthers.

In addition to Franklin, Roustio had 13 for the Panthers, Armstrong 11 and Darien McClain eight. The Tigers were led by Epenesa with 16 points, with Mark Smith getting 12, Kyler Davis six and Oliver Stephen and Jordan Harris three each.

Edwardsville travels to St. Louis to take on Gateway STEM (formerly Gateway Tech) Tuesday evening.