

Spiller's Late Three Key To Edwardsville 28-24 Win Over KIPP Academy Of St. Louis In Tight Defensive Battle, Tigers Now 8-3

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EDWARDSVILLE - Sophomore guard Bryce Spiller connected on a three-point shot from the top of the key with 17.9 seconds left in regulation to give Edwardsville a very hard-fought 28-24 win over KIPP Academy in a boys basketball game played Tuesday evening at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

Spiller's three-ball was the difference in another close, defensive-minded game that somewhat mirrored the Tigers' win the night before over Riverview Gardens. In a close game where points came at a premium, Spiller stepped up to hit the big shot at the end.

"Yeah, I got on some of our guys at halftime that had missed some," said Edwardsville head coach Dustin Battas, "and not on them to stop shooting, but to shoot with confidence and have your eyes open and ready to make them. I thought we had three or four guys in the first half that just missed shots that they can make, and some of that was because they were rushed. (Spiller) really stepped up big there. He missed a couple of free throws and I thought man, he could be really down. He's really hard on himself, Bryce is really hard on himself and I knew we were going to get guys open. We talked about it in the time-out. I'm happy he had the confidence to take that shot, and that's what we expect out of Bryce; we think he's that type of player, he puts a lot of work in, so I'm happy for him that he got rewarded with that because he's been working really hard in practice, and we certainly needed that shot."

The Tigers once again showed much resiliency and kept battling, even when things weren't going particularly well, and responded well, especially having played tough games back-to-back.

"I hope that's a staple of our program," Battas said, "is just gritty guys coming in. We practice awful hard, so the games should mean something to them because they've certainly have sacrificed a lot. So I told them after the game, that people are going to say 'oh, I can't believe you only won by three,' or 'I can't believe you only scored twenty-something points.' Wins are hard. Two games in two nights and that's a team, the way they press and trap, you really miss your point guards. So, I thought Lucas (Greer) did a tremendous job, and Isayah (Kloster) helped him get in the right spots and be strong with the ball. That's asking an awful lot out of two guys who haven't had many reps at point guard, and a team that is without their two main ball handlers. And we're just proud that we dug in our heels in there, and they really guarded well and got a couple of big breaks at the end when we needed them."

The Tiger defense was very strong once again, and it was another big factor in the outcome.

"Yeah, and they're fast and they've got a couple of guys that make them," Battas said. "(Demario Barlow)'s a really good player. So if competing and toughness are kind of the backbone of the program, I think another thing is our defense. Defense always gives us a chance, and we'll make shots. We played two games in two nights against two teams that press, sometimes we get heavy legs and our guys work hard in practice; we shoot every day. So I'm not down on that, we'll make them as we go along. And I think it was just a case of that they made us go a little faster than we wanted to, and I think some of our guys got a little fatigued. And like I said, we made some big ones when we needed them."

It was Shaun Pacatte who put the Tigers into an early lead with a basket and three-point play to give Edwardsville an early 5-0 lead, but Barlow came right back with three consecutive baskets to give the Wolves their first lead a 6-5. A Kloster free throw right before the end of the period left the score tied 6-6 after one.

After the two sides exchanged baskets to start the second quarter, Greer drilled a three to give the Tigers an 11-8 lead. Back came the Wolves, led by a pair of baskets from Brandon Grooms to give KIPP a 12-11 lead, which is where the score stood at the halftime siren.



The defenses stayed tough in the third period, with the lead trading hands four times in the quarter. Eventually, a free throw by Iose Epenesa and a basket from Spiller gave the Tigers an 18-16 lead, but Lajuan Wiley hit a floater in the lane and Grooms scored shortly before the buzzer to give the Wolves a 20-18 lead at the end of the period.

A Barlow basket at the start of the fourth quarter gave KIPP a 22-18 lead, the first time the Wolves led by more than two points in the game, but the Tigers fought back with baskets from Spiller and Pacatte to level the scores at 22-22. A pair of free throws by Greer gave Edwardsville the lead back at 24-22, but Grooms countered with a basket to tie the game again 24-24. The Wolves had a pair of chances to retake the lead, but a traveling call against KIPP with 50.9 seconds left gave the Tigers the ball. After a time out, the Tigers got the ball to Spiller, who nailed the big three with 17.9 seconds to go to give Edwardsville the lead a 27-24, with an Epenesa free throw with three seconds left icing the game for the Tigers, giving them the 28-24 win.

Spiller, Greer, and Pacatte all led Edwardsville with seven points each, while Kloster had three points and both Hersch Greene and Epenesa had two points apiece.

The Wolves were led by Barlow's 12 points, while Grooms had 10 points and Wiley had two points.



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