

# **Bush Scores 11 Points, Hits Seven Of Eight Free Throws Down Stretch, Edwardsville Uses 19-0 Run To Get Bounce Back SWC Win**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Jordan Bush scored 11 points as one of four Edwardsville players who scored in double figures, as he connected on seven of eight free throws down the stretch as the Tigers also used a 19-0 run in the first and second quarters to defeat

Belleville West in a Southwestern Conference game Tuesday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

Sophomore Malik Allen also contributed big to the Tigers' bounce-back win from their loss to Collinsville at home last Friday night. Allen just returned to the lineup after fighting COVID-19, and his contributions to the win were invaluable.

"Malik has a lot of ability," said Edwardsville head coach Dustin Battas, "and he was out for a couple of weeks with the COVID stuff, so that set him back even more. And he's just being more consistent, understanding our scheme more. It's hard for a sophomore to play in our league. And he knows that, Bryce (Spiller) knows that. A. J.'s (Tillman) also a sophomore. So there's a learning curve there, but certainly, he has some ability, and he's just learning more of our stuff. And he's getting a little better each day, and we felt like tonight, we wanted to make more threes and he can shoot. So we put him in the starting lineup to get them spread out a little bit more. But obviously, it paid off for us, he was able to make some shots."

It also pointed out something that the average fan doesn't always recognize, according to Battas.

"I told them this after the game; I'm not sure the average fan realizes how hard it is to be a sophomore and to play a varsity game in our conference," Battas said. "It's 17- and 18-year-olds who's been in our conference for about three or four years. So, our sophomores were great tonight."

Bush's clutch free-throw shooting down the stretch was also a big factor in the outcome.



"Coach (Mike) Waldo always used to tell me it's good to have a football guy on your team," Battas said with a big smile and laugh. "Jordan's a running back, so not a lot intimidates him, not a lot gets him rattled, because if you're getting the ball handed to you in a football game and 11 guys are chasing you, so that's pretty easy. Jordan was terrific tonight, he really was. He handled the ball making those free throws. He was also out for two weeks, so now we've had him and Malik in a full week of practice, getting their conditioning back, and that's going to make them better. Jordan was terrific, there's no doubt."

Edwardsville was able to overcome the Maroons' dictating the tempo of play in the second half, and made the adjustments very well.

"Really, in the second half, they dictated tempo because they were behind," Battas said, "and they were going to start changing their defensive trap and pressing us. So, the main thing in the second half for us was keeping our spacing. Stay aggressive, but keep your spacing and try to attack the rim, and we did that great at times, and we'll get better at that. We haven't had a big lead in awhile to play like that. I would have liked to, in a perfect world, execute a few things better in the second half on offense, but they made that a lot with subbing in, putting in smaller, faster guys and getting all over us and just making harder to get to the basket."

For Edwardsville, it was a great bounce back from the loss to the Kahoks, and Battas thought the Tigers' practice session on Sunday afternoon set the tone for the game on Tuesday night.

"It's a great win for our guys," Battas said. "Practiced on Sunday, so we were off on Saturday, practice on Sunday was the best practice we've had all year. And I told the guys tonight after the game I thought we won tonight because practice was so good on Sunday. They just came in, they were energized, they didn't let the loss Friday bother them. So I had a good feeling going into tonight, just because practice was good. The way we do things, especially playing some young guys and inexperienced guys, practice is everything and we have to practice good every day. And we've been doing that more consistently."

The Maroons kept scrapping and playing very well themselves, but in the end, it was the Tigers' ability to make the plays, along with the big 19-0 run, that helped spell the difference.

"Yeah, I mean, they made some key plays and stepped up down the stretch at the end," said West head coach Alex Schobert. "Like I just told them, the big reason they were able to do that at the end was because they got off to a good start. They're a good team on their home floor, and this is such a good conference We can't spot them a 16, 18-point lead like we did tonight, and then expect to battle back. And that's unfortunately becoming a trend to us. We've got to do a better job coming off and getting stronger."

West was able to bounce back nicely from the 19-0 run to cut the lead to two near the end, and it's a testament to the hard work that the Maroon players are putting in.

"These kids, that's the number one thing," Schobert said. "Effort, intensity. They haven't quit all year, they continue to battle back. But now, we need to turn the corner like we talked about, and come out with that same intensity and sense of urgency to start the game. I think that's the key to the second half of our season here."

West was able to cut the Edwardsville lead to 53-51 with 23.1 seconds left in regulation, but Bush was able to hit the free throws down the stretch, and Schobert gave the Tigers credit for that.

"Oh, absolutely," Schobert said. "Their kids stepped up, they made plays; the offensive rebound by (Isayah Kloster) was huge at the end of the game as well. And (Bush) stepped up, and we knew he'd make free throws. We weren't trying to foul him, and we just didn't execute our game plan there down the stretch."

The teams started out trading threes, with a three from Darvin Morris putting West up 9-5, with an exchange of baskets making the score 11-7 halfway through the first quarter. The Tigers went on to score the periods' final 16 points, behind three-point shooting from Tillman, Allen and Spiller, with Kloster and Allen hitting the final threes to give Edwardsville a 23-11 lead after the first quarter.

An early three from Allen made the score 29-11 before a Travon Hines free throw with 6:30 left in the half broke the string to make it 29-12. David Marshall, Jr. hit a three to further cut the lead to 29-15, with the Tigers going on another run, this time 7-0 to stretch the advantage out to 36-15 late in the period. The Maroons, led by Damien Farley, scored the last eight points of the half to cut the lead to 36-23 at the interval.

The Maroons began to chip away at the Tigers' lead in the third, as Daylen Byrd, Marshall and Myles Liddell all scored in the third to cut away at the lead. Spiller and Bush had big baskets and free throws to keep West at bay, but Byrd hit at the buzzer to cut the Tiger lead to 43-38 after three quarters. The Maroons kept coming in the fourth, and late in the game had cut the lead to 51-48. Bush then went on to connect on seven-of-eight from the line in the final seconds, although a three from Liddell brought the Maroons to within 53-51. The Tigers scored their final five points at the line, and Kloster also grabbed a clutch offensive rebound after a miss to help the Tigers go on to the 58-51 win.

Kloster led the way with 12 points for Edwardsville, while both Bush and Tillman had 11 points, Spiller added 10 points, Allen hit for nine points and Shaun Pacatte had five points. Byrd led all scorers with 18 points for West, with Marshall adding 14 points, Farley hit for six points, Liddell had five points, and both Hines and Morris had three points each.

The Maroons are now 5-11 and play at O'Fallon on Friday night in a 7:30 p.m. game, then host McCluer North of Florissant, Mo., Saturday night in a 6:30 p.m. start before playing Belleville Althoff Catholic in the opening round of the Belleville East Chick-Fil-A Classic next Wednesday night at 7:30 p.m. The Tigers improve to 8-9 and play at a resurgent Alton team Friday night at the Redbirds Nest at 7:30 p.m., then meet Granite City in the opener of the Jersey Mid-Winter Classic Monday night at 6 p.m.

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