

Pickett Scores 23 Points To Lead Lancers, Tigers Give Good Effort In 47-39 SWC Loss

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Junior forward Jordan Pickett led all scorers with 23 points as Belleville East played very good team defense to help defeat Edwardsville in a Southwestern Conference boys basketball game 47-39 Friday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Tigers gave a very good effort, even though the team hadn't been able to practice due to the snowstorm that came through the area this week, rallying several times from double-digit deficits, but the Lancers answered well to keep Edwardsville at bay in going on to the win.

"We're proud of our guys," said Edwardsville head coach Dustin Battas. "We thought our effort was really good, we thought we competed hard. Belleville East is a really good team. (Pickett) is obviously a great player, and we have a lot of respect for coach (Jeff) Creek over there. We hadn't practiced in a few days, so I just told our guys to try your best, try to compete on every play, and they'll be some things that won't be perfect. We missed some shots and some things, but I thought our effort was really there. So as coaches, we didn't get the result that we wanted, but we're really proud of the effort and we think our guys did a lot of things well."

Although the Tigers were unable to practice for three days, due to school closings and remote learning because of the snow, Battas was very happy with his team's effort, playing very hard as usual.

"We proud of the effort and we thought some guys really did a good job on defense, giving that we just had a walkthrough today to kind of go over our scheme of defense for them and it required a lot of guys to try hard and be thinking about what they were doing and to execute that," Coach Battas said. "We thought the difference was that they made a few more baskets than we did, but that's a great team and we're proud of the intensity our guys had, we thought we competed on both ends of the floor, we were six-of-seven from the free-throw line, we took care of the ball, we limited some turnovers. So there's a lot of things to build on as we head into next week."

Pickett was the biggest factor with his 23 points on the night, and Belleville East head coach Jeff Creek felt he played well, and the team defense was also a factor.

"I thought Jordan played well," Creek said, "We played good as a team, the team defense was good. We could have rebounded a little bit better, but overall, a great team effort tonight."

Pickett is the key player for East, with many big performances this season, and on this night, he was the key contributor to the Lancers' win.

"He's scored efficiently," Creek said. "I mean, he's had a bunch of good game for us this year, but tonight, he scored efficiently, he kind of took control of the offense, kind of slowed us down when we needed a good possession and overall did a great job."

The Lancers' team defense also did a good job in limiting Edwardsville opportunities and Creek credited a number of players for their effort.

"The team defense was good," Creek said, "and Jackson Muse did a great, great job on the (Bryce) Spiller kid. He face-guarded him the whole night, made him work and held him to seven points, so he really did a great job defensively. And the other guys did a good job too. We just need to rebound a little bit better."

As the Lancers and the rest of the state are getting ready to go into the postseason soon, Creek feels that his team has played hard all year, and he can't ask for much more.

"It's good," Creek said. "The kids are playing hard; that's all we ask for them, to play hard. Sometimes, the shots aren't going to fall, but as long as they play hard defensively and rebound, we've got a good shot to do some things."



After Antwine Wilson and Isayah Kloster traded baskets to start the game, the Lancers went on the first run, a 9-2 charge led by a three and a pair of free throws from Pickett, baskets from Wilson, T'Jae Montgomery and another basket from Pickett to take an 11-4 lead. Edwardsville got a basket from Kloster and a pair of free throws from A.J. Tillman to cut the lead to 11-8 at the end of the first quarter.

A pair of Spiller free throws cut the lead to 11-10 at the start of the second quarter, with the Lancers answering with a 9-0 run, using a basket and a later three from Pickett and a pair of baskets from Muse to take a 20-10 lead. A three from Lucas Greer cut the lead to 20-13, with an exchange of baskets shortly before the buzzer giving East a 22-15 lead at halftime.

Kloster hit a short jumper to start the second half to cut the Lancer lead to 22-17, but East then went on a 7-0 run, with Pickett sinking a three and a three-point play from Byron Jones to give East a 29-17 lead. Edwardsville made a comeback attempt, led by Malik Allen and Hersch Greene, but three free throws from Pickett put the score at 32-23. Both teams scored five points the rest of the quarter to give East a 37-28 lead after three quarters.

East extended the advantage to 41-28 at the start of the fourth, but Johnnie Robinson's three and a basket from Tillman cut the lead to 41-33 past the midway point of the period. The Tigers continued to hang in and cut the lead to 45-39 on a three from Alec Marchetto with 40 seconds left in regulation, but the Lancers were able to hang on and complete the 47-39 win.

Besides Pickett's 23 points, Wilson, Jones and Muse all had eight points each for East, while Kloster led the Tigers with eight points, while Spiller had seven points, Marchetto had six points, Tillman and Jordan Bush each had four points, Robinson and Greer hit for three points each and Greene scored two points.

The Lancers are now 16-9 and host Alton on Tuesday night, then play at O'Fallon next Friday in a pair of 7:30 p.m. tip-offs. Creek is very confident that his team will play well and awaits their seeding in the IHSA Class 4A regional.

"All good, competitive teams in our regional," Creek said. "We've just got to play our best game every night to advance."

The Tigers go to 10-15 on the year and travel to Mascoutah on Tuesday, then host East St. Louis next Friday in the Edwardsville Hall of Fame night, with both games starting at 7:30 p.m.

"We go to Mascoutah on Tuesday, who's one of the top (Class) 3A teams in the state of Illinois," Battas said, "and then East St. Louis on Friday. We're going to take advantage of some practice time, hopefully, if the weather cooperates. And we are better. We are better than what we were a month ago, we're a lot better than we were two months ago, so we've been reminding our guys of that and we'll just keep pushing them to hopefully play our best basketball as we head into the postseason."

The playoffs, like an SWC league game, can be very unpredictable and hard-fought as always.

"Oh, yeah, it's a tough league," Battas said, "and the postseason is pretty much a conference tournament, and you add in Quincy and Granite City to that. So we'll see a team for a third or fourth time, most likely in the postseason. It may be Belleville East again, we'll see. But there's no game left on our schedule that's going to be easy; we know that. So practice is important, keeping our guys positive and keeping them excited to compete is important. Their mind is in a good place. Tonight, they were ready to go mentally, and after the game, they were disappointed, but not discouraged. So we like where they're at and we're looking forward to having a good week next week against Mascoutah and East St. Louis."





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