

Tigers' Ava Waltenberger Rates As One Of Top Hitters In Region, Is An iCAN Clinic Female Athlete of Month

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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville girls' volleyball senior Ava Waltenberger ranks at the top of area players at the net as she enters her senior season.



The Tigers' girls volleyball hitter Waltenberger played a key role in the Tigers' come-from-behind win over Belleville East on Tuesday night in a Southwestern Conference match, coming up with some big shots that helped Edwardsville go on to a 21-25, 25-11, 25-22 win over the Lancers to help extend the team's conference winning streak to 55 matches in a row.

In a post-match interview, Waltenberger was happy with the win, although acknowledging that the Tigers still have much work to do in practice.

"I'm feeling happy," Waltenberger said. "I'm just glad that we won, but we definitely need some more practice for sure. But I mean, the win is all that matters this early in the season."

The Tigers rallied back from one set down, where the team didn't play its best, to win the last two sets and the match. It's a good indication of the Tigers' possibilities this season.

"It was great," Waltenberger said. "I'm really proud of my team for pushing back against the (Lancers) because we were just not connecting. But that second set, we put it all back together and persevered through the third set.

Waltenberger felt the key point was when she was able to get a kill off the East libero, who had done a very good job of returning shots all night.

"I mean, my other middle got that big block in the middle," Waltenberger said, "and when I got that kill on the right side and the libero didn't return it, which she had been returning all the other hits. I think that really got us going there."

Waltenberger also gave credit to the Lancers for a scrappy effort all night, in which East kept plugging away and didn't give up, keeping on fighting throughout the match.

"They put up a really good fight," she said of the Tuesday matchup. "But the win was because of momentum and a team effort."

The competition in the Southwestern Conference is very keen and Waltenberger knows that the Tigers and other teams have to be ready to play and be on their toes every night.

"I think that's what we did tonight, too," Waltenberger said. "We went into it too nonchalant, like, we should have been more mentally prepared for the game tonight."

Edwardsville will be competing in the Crossroads Classic this weekend in Effingham, which will have many of the best teams in both the state and the Midwest coming in, and Waltenberger is very excited to be able to play and compete in the tournament.

"I'm super excited for that," Waltenberger said, "and I think, after this week of practice, we're going to be ready for all the opponents there."

And such as in last weekend's Tiger Classic, which saw Edwardsville finish second to O'Fallon in a three-set thriller, Waltenberger knows the Tigers will be ready for the competition in Effingham.

"Yeah, we have to be ready, but I believe in us and I think we're going to do really well this weekend. I'm excited for this weekend."