

Curry Scores Twice In Both OTs, Missed Two-Point Conversion Pass Gives Tigers 28-27 Double OT Homecoming Win Over Lancers

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Quarterback Jake Curry ran for two touchdowns in both overtime rounds and a missed two-point conversion pass from Darron Millender, Jr. to Justin Spears went incomplete as Edwardsville defeated Belleville East in a big Southwestern Conference tilt 28-27 in double overtime Friday night at Tiger Stadium.



It was both Edwardsville's Homecoming night as well as the annual Senior Night, and the Tigers football Class of 2023 - Daion Gaston, Makonnen Simmons, Brandon Rodgers, Jordan Bush, Johnnie Robinson, Christ Green-Williams, Jr., Tyler Dacus, Jalen Flowers, De'Shawn Larson, Jack Laughlin, Zach Ziolkowski, Evan Holderer, Luke Williams, Patrick Sepanski, Charlie Fields, Ali Haroun, Dorian Arguelles, Dawson Rull and Robert Dewald - and their families, along with the senior Tiger cheerleaders, dance team members and marching band member, were thanked and honored for the contributions to the programs.

As for the game, the Tigers scored twice to take a 14-0 lead in the first half, but the Lancers controlled the ball for much of the second half and also took advantage of a pair of turnovers, including recovering a fumble in the Tiger end zone, to tie the game 14-14 to force overtime.

"First of all, congratulations to a hard-fought game to Belleville East," said Edwardsville head coach Matt Martin, "and Mike Harrison (the Lancers' head coach) and his staff, We've been in this before; I think it was, what, two years ago, we had a close one with them. And they just seem to always play us tough and they're a physical team and they're a well-coached team. On our part, you can't lose the turnover battle 4-1. It puts you in a bad situation."

The Lancers' second-half ball control was a key factor in turning the game around in East's favor, along with taking advantage of Tigers' mistakes to fight back to draw level.

"Yeah, and some of that was our fault," Martin said. "It was three-and-outs. We just couldn't get the ball back. I've watched their tape and they're a pretty good team when they don't turn the ball over and they did a good job of holding on to it tonight."

Dacus kicked the conversions in both rounds of overtime, and it turned out to be a difference-maker.

"Yep," Martin said. "We have confidence in our kickers, no doubt."

The win was especially important, given the up-and-down manner of the game.

"Absolutely," Martin said. "Like I told our kids, I'd much rather be disappointed in our play with a W than a loss, right? And that's what it is. I feel like we could have done some things better, not taking anything away from Belleville East. But they found a way to win."

The first touchdown Curry scored in overtime was a new play designed by assistant coach Justin Winslow and was used in a game for the first time. It turned out to be a key play in the game.

"Yeah, that was a new play we've been working on," Martin said. "Coach Winslow put that in; we haven't run it in a game yet. So we ran it twice there and it worked pretty well."

Both teams held each other in their opening drives, and on the Tigers' second possession of the game, on a third-and-14 situation, Curry kept the ball to the right side, found a hole and went 42 yards for the game's first touchdown, with Dacus adding the conversion with 2:46 left in the first quarter to give Edwardsville a 7-0 lead. The game stayed that way until late in the first half, when the Tigers went on a drive of 48 yards that was finished on a brilliant 15-yard run by Bush 1:13 from halftime to give Edwardsville a 14-0 lead at halftime.

The Lancers took the second-half kickoff and proceeded to keep the ball on a 16-play drive that took 7:13 off the clock, with Millender hitching up with short passes to Jordan Pickett and Armon Vinson, along with getting good runs from Moisey Trimble. The Lancers were held eventually by the Tiger defense, but got the ball back and went on another drive that took off another 6:13 from the clock, this time scoring on a three-yard run up the middle by Javion Mobley-Jackson that cut the Tigers' lead to 14-6 after the conversion kick was blocked.

After the Lancer intercepted a pass, East went on another long drive that was stopped short on the Tigers' one on a fourth down play. On the first play after the Tigers took over, the Lancers recovered a fumble in the Edwardsville end zone for a touchdown with 4:39 left in regulation, tying the game when Millender connected with Mobley-Jackson on a two-point convert that made it 14-14.

The Tigers had a final chance in the final minute of regulation, but a long pass into the end zone on the final play of regulation fell incomplete, forcing overtime. The Lancers won the toss and went first on offense, scoring in two plays, with the conversion just barely going through to give the Lancers a 21-14 lead. It didn't take Edwardsville long to draw level, as Curry ran in from 10 yards out on the first play of the Tigers' possession to tie the game after Dacus' conversion, forcing a second round of overtime.

The Tigers went first, and Curry scored on the second play of the possession from four yards out to give Edwardsville a 28-21 lead after the conversion. The Lancers had their turn on offense and on their last play of the possession on the six, Millender found Pickett and hit him with a pass near the goal line that didn't appear to break the plane of the line, but was ruled a touchdown to make it 28-27. After a Edwardsville time out, the Lancers decided to go for a two-pointer to win the game, but a Millender pass to Justin Spears got away and fell incomplete, giving the Tigers the 28-27 win.

The Lancers are now 3-4 on the year, while the Tigers go to 6-1, officially clinching an IHSA playoff berth, and play next week at East St. Louis in a 7 p.m. kickoff.

After the game, Martin had words of praise for his seniors and their many contributions to the program.

"Yeah, you know, senior night. Not all of them got to play, unfortunately," Martin said. "But they contribute tremendously to preparing this team all week long. So I'm proud of this group. This group's had a big part in getting us on the right track."



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