

Tigers Honor Five Seniors In Annual Pre-Match Ceremonies, Play Well, But Lose To Mater Dei

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville High girls' volleyball team played well, and had plenty of good moments, but in the end, lost their regular season home finale to Breese Mater Dei Catholic 25-18, 25-20 in a match played Monday evening at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

It was the Tigers' annual Senior Night match, and in the traditional pre-match ceremonies, the five players in the Class of 2023 - Ava Waltenberger, Vyla Hupp, Dallas Jenkins, Mackenzie Heberer and Claire Dunivan - and their families were honored and thanked for their contributions to the Edwardsville program and when the match started, the Tigers played well against the Knights, who's one of the state's traditional volleyball powers.

"We put some good points together," said Edwardsville head coach Heather Ohlau, "and Mater Dei's defense was scrappy and put together some long rallies. Mater Dei's always a tough team and that's why we schedule them, so they'll make us better."

The Tigers also played solid defensively, which helped their offense find good shots and score points.

"Our defense kept the ball alive," Ohlau said, "and our hitters were able to find the open shots, In the end, most of the points went Mater Dei's way."

The five seniors who were honored before the match made very important contributions to the Tigers during their time in the program and Ohlau is very proud of the players and their accomplishments.

"This group of seniors have filled in a leadership role and set an example for our underclassmen," Ohlau said. "This group is a part of the legacy of Edwardsville volleyball and maintained the high standards of our program. We'll miss them, but I hope I get them for another four weeks," she said with a laugh.

The Knights end their regular season 23-7, while the Tigers go to 22-12 and play at Belleville West in their final regular season match on Thursday in a 5:45 p.m. start, then will host a IHSA Class 4A regional Oct. 25 at 5:30 p.m. in the first semifinal, while Alton plays West at 6:30 p.m. in the second semifinal. The final is set for Oct. 27 at 6 p. m., with the winner playing against the Belleville East winner in the Normal Community sectional Oct. 31. Ohlau knows that her team will be ready to go in their bid to return to the state finals, where the Tigers finished fourth in 2021.

"I'm hoping we can make the adjustments we need to be able to take our game play to the next level," Ohlau said. "I always look forward to the playoffs. That's where anything can happen."