

New Era In Edwardsville Hockey Begins As Vetter Stops 42 Shots, Schlarmann, Gcolan Score As Tigers Tie Cadets 2-2 In RP Lumber Center World Premier

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
November 4 2022 3:53 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville High Mid-States Club Hockey Association team opened its new home, the RP Lumber Center, in style with a lavish opening ceremony that introduced the 2022-23 Tigers players, then saw goalie Kai Vetter come up big

throughout the game with 42 saves, while Dean Schlarman scored a late first period power play goal and Konner Goclan came up with a second period equalizer to enable the Tigers to come away with a 2-2 tie with perennial power CBC Thursday night in the season opener for both teams.

A loud and boisterous crowd of Edwardsville supporters cheered the Tigers on in the MSCHA's first-ever on-campus arena in the league's 50-year history, and following the game, Tigers' head coach Jason Walker was indeed a happy man.

"After that game, I feel really good," Walker said. "The guys battled; they played hard. Defensively, I thought we were very good, limited some of their bigger chances and whenever you play against that team, you know it's going to be a battle. They threw everything at us tonight. Between Kai and the way we played tonight defensively, I thought we were really happy with the game."

The power play goal by Schlarman was the Tigers' first-ever goal at the new arena and it helped make a big difference in the outcome.

"I mean, yeah, to get that power play goal and to just get us going, get us started," Walker said, "I mean, it was a big one. Coming from a sophomore like Dean Schlarman, I thought he was just awesome tonight. He was a lot of fun to watch."

The Tigers had an incredible opportunity at the start of the second period as well, as a player batted the puck out of mid-air towards a wide-open goal and somehow never crossed the line.

"I don't know how that stayed out," Walker said. "We were wondering that, too. It was like we had a body there and the puck was right there on the goal line. It was just one of those things. But the guys just kept at it and we were finally able to tie it up."



The Tigers took a lot of lumps last season as the team went 1-21-0 in returning to the league in 2021-22 after sitting out the year before because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the opener, the experience the players got in that difficult year started to pay off.

"The guys, being a year older, this team is hard working," Walker said, "and they're really motivated to do well. Like I told them, this is a starting point. We get better from here and we keep building on it."

The Cadets came out flying, outshooting the Tigers overall 44-16 in the game, but ran into a hot goaltender in Vetter.

"Well, like I said, he shut the door, especially early on," said CBC head coach John Jost, Jr., "but we had a chance to break it open, maybe 3, 4-0. He shut the door and you could see them gaining life. Just one of those nights."

The Cadets had a pair of good goals to take a 2-0 first period lead, but after the second goal and had several good opportunities, but Vetter and the Tigers always had an answer in a game that wasn't bad at all for a season opener.

"Yeah, I agree," Jost said. "Like I said, then, we started missing the net at the end and they were moving pucks around and breaking out, doing the things that, really, helped

them. We're going to figure it out, we've got somewhat of a young team here, we've got a lot of new faces and we're going to figure it out."

The CBC hockey tradition is one of the best in the league, but Jost feels it's up to the younger players to start their own tradition and build upon the team's legacy.

"Correct," Jost said. "The problem is we can't live off that. These guys have got to kind of make their own tradition. But they know there's a certain way we like to play and that's the way we're going to keep going at it."

It's still a very promising season ahead for CBC and Jost thinks the players will use the draw as a learning experience and move on as the season progresses.

"It does," Jost said. "Obviously, we're not happy with a tie; we felt like we could have won the game. But we're not going to let this be a detachment to our season. If anything, we're learn from it. We've got 20 more games, we've got plenty of talent here. We're going to be OK, we're going to learn from this."

The game started off well for the Cadets, as they controlled the play for the most part and kept the puck in the Tigers' zone early on. Vetter kept CBC off the scoreboard early with some good saves and the Tigers killed off a penalty to Joe Viox for interference early on. The early pressure paid off at 4:26, when Joe Lopiccolo took a pass from Brayden McDonald and beat Vetter to the near post for the first goal at the new arena to give CBC a 1-0 lead. It became 2-0 at 6:53 when Matt Jost scored on a shot up the middle that got past Vetter, with assists going to Andrew Mullen and Logan Denton to double the Cadet lead.

The Tigers got their first shot on goal from Viox close to the six-minute mark in the first period and gained momentum late. With McDonald off for interference, It didn't take Edwardsville long to score as Schlarman got a pass from Viox and scored the first-ever Tigers goal at the new arena at 14:47 to cut the CBC lead to 2-1 after the first.

Early in the second, the Tigers had a glorious chance to tie the game when an Edwardsville player took a swing at a puck in mid-air towards a wide-open goal, and it somehow stayed out to keep the game 2-1 for CBC. Meanwhile, Vetter remained steady in the net, stopping a number of good chances for the Cadets, often two and three shots at a time.

The Tigers got the equalizer at 12:27 when Goclan took a pass from Carson Weber and scored to tie the game at 2-2, sending off a big celebration in the stands. On the same play, Carter Zimmer was penalized for interference, but the Tigers were able to kill off the Cadet power play to keep it tied 2-2 after two periods.

Both teams had ample opportunity to take the lead, but Vetter and Cadet goalie Connor Hof came up big to keep the puck out of the net as the game ended in the 2-2 tie.

Both teams open the season 0-0-1 and the Tigers play again at home against Municipal Division rival Kirkwood in an 8:30 p.m. face-off time next Thursday, while the Cadets play Monday night at Centene Ice Center, the Blues' practice home, against DeSmet Jesuit, also in an 8:30 p.m. start. Although the point for the tie wasn't what the Tigers hoped for, they'll gladly take it and go from there.

"Anytime you can get a point in our conference, it's big," Walker said, "against a team like that, too. So we'll take the point, we'll take it as a learning experience, we come out of the game feeling pretty good about where we're at. So, we just move on from here."





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