

Grand Opening Of RP Lumber Center Is Big Affair As Tigers, Cadets Play Inaugural Game In New Arena, First Reviews Of Arena Are Positive

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - After many years of playing at the East Alton Ice Arena in both the Mississippi Valley and Mid-States Club Hockey Associations, the Edwardsville hockey team's new home opened on Thursday night to rave reviews and positive feedback at the Tigers tied with CBC 2-2 in the inaugural game at RP Lumber Center in Edwardsville.



The arena is the MSCHA's first-ever on-campus arena, located right down from the Winston Brown Track and Field Center and the Edwardsville Tennis Center, and the facility is very much a state-of-the-art building that fans will very much enjoy, providing a great atmosphere for hockey and exciting times ahead for the Tigers' players, coaches and fans.

The opening ceremonies was very impressive, as the house lights were dimmed and orange spotlights were shined on the corner where the Tigers will come out from their locker room, and starting with goalie Kai Vetter, the 2022-23 players were introduced and skated out to the blue line to thunderous applause from the fans in attendance. Although the Tigers enjoyed tremendous student support before at East Alton, the on-campus facility will make it much easier for students and supporters in the local community to attend games regularly.





Edwardsville High School Principal Dr. Steve Stuart was ecstatic about the opening of the new ice arena and complex overall for the EHS students.

"As far as the ice rink, we are excited for the opportunities that this facility will provide for our students," he said. "Besides the obvious benefit of having an ice sheet for our hockey teams, the weight room and track will also allow our students to pursue healthy activities.

"The facility also has an area where students can go and hang out. There are areas they can study, or just hang out and play games and watch tv. Our art students have provided artwork to help decorate the center as well. This is just another incredible addition to our already stellar athletic complex that has grown over the years."



The arena already has a fan in long-time CBC head coach John Jost, Jr.

"It's a great place," Jost said during a post-game interview. "As I said, this is a rink we'd love to play here more. I mean, this is terrific and it's not that far a drive for us. We don't necessarily love not winning, but they've got a good thing going on over here, this is a great facility. I'd love to play them again over here."

The arena was privately financed with land donated by the Edwardsville Community Unit District 7 in the back of the school campus, and will officially be run by the City of Edwardsville Parks and Recreation Department. Sponsors made donations to help the construction of the building, which also contains a fitness center, with an upper-level jogging track and weight room, state-of-the-art locker rooms, and other facilities as part of the arena and other comforts for fans and participants.

The atmosphere for hockey is very loud and boisterous, as the Tiger fans cheered on everything that happened on the ice, and went into great celebrations after both Dean Schlarman and Konnor Goclan scored in the 2-2 season-opening tie against the Cadets.

The Tigers will be playing almost every Thursday night at the arena, with their next game against division rival Kirkwood in an 8:30 p.m. start.



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