

# **Allen Leads Again With 15 Points, Edwardsville Defense Shuts Down Gateway STEM Running Game, To Help Take 60-21 Win**

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EDWARDSVILLE - Malik Allen again was Edwardsville's leading scorer, this time connecting for 15 points, while the Tigers' defense shut down the St. Louis Gateway STEM running game with solid defense as Edwardsville won its second straight game over a St. Louis Public High League team, taking a 60-21 win over the Jaguars Friday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Tigers again played very well, not allowing the high-scoring Gateway offense to open up and taking advantage of numerous opportunities, as Edwardsville held the Jaguars to only nine points in the first half.

"I thought our defense was good," said Tigers' head coach Dustin Battas, "I thought our guys tried hard and really executed our game plan on defense. When you hold a team to that few points at halftime, you have a good chance of having a decent-sized lead, and I thought we were just consistent in our effort and our execution just kind of built off that lead. It was a good night for our guys."

Gateway STEM is a team that likes to run and it was important for the Tigers' defense to help set a slower tempo, which helped shut down the running game.

"I told our guys in practice they scored 77 points last week," Battas said, "and they really score in a hurry. So I thought we took that away and our defense made them play

in the quarter court and that was obviously to our advantage, So our guys really locked in on what to do on defense. It's impressive to hold a team like that to 20-something points. like I say because they average much more when they play in their league over in the City."

For the second consecutive game, Edwardsville was able to use all the players on their bench, a great reward for all of the team's hard work in practice.

"Yes, our guys are all very deserving," Battas said, "they try hard in practice, so it's nice to get those players in, especially some of our seniors that don't get to play in JV games and give them the opportunity to be rewarded for all their hard work."



Nine players scored for the Tigers, which showed much balance on the team.

"It's good," Battas said. "Sometimes, you take what the defense gives you. We obviously like to get Malik open, because he can really make them, but sometimes, teams are going to start crowding him, so it's good for those other guys to start getting a feel for scoring some baskets. I thought we offensive rebounded well and got some baskets just for trying hard and putting some offensive rebounds back in. Johnnie Robinson, I think, had five offensive rebounds."

The Tigers were able to get many good things to take away from the win as well.

"I think the tempo was good for us," Battas said. "I think it's good seeing teams playing different styles. They had a few unorthodox things they do on defense with trapping that has actually given us trouble in past years. So it just makes you play a little different style. They want to play in the 70s and 80s, obviously, your challenge is being able to take care of the ball and one thing I was looking at was turnovers and assists. We had four turnovers and 17 assists. I think that shows a bit of a maturation process with our point guards being able to take care of the ball and execute, even amongst trapping and some wild things that we had to face on defense."

The Tigers, behind Robinson and Allen, scored the first seven points of the game before a Dwayne Kirkman scored the first basket of the game for Gateway to make in 7-2. Edwardsville then went on a 10-2 run for the remainder of the period, with Allen, Jake Curry and A.J. Tillman doing most of the scoring as the Tigers took a 17-4 lead after the first quarter.

Allen and Iose Epenesa scored the first four points of the second quarter before another Kirkman basket made the score 21-6 for Edwardsville, then the Tigers used their defense to create opportunities on the offensive end as Edwardsville outscored the Jaguars 18-3 the rest of the period, as Allen, Tillman, Kris Crosby, Curry, Robinson and Jonathan Stump all scored during the run that gave the Tigers a 39-9 lead at halftime.

A Leon Harris basket at the start of the second half put the Jaguars into double figures at 39-11 and after an exchange of baskets, Tillman, Allen, Curry and Epenesa helped the Tigers to go on to outscore Gateway 10-7 to take a 51-18 lead after the third quarter and trigger the fourth quarter running clock rule. The fourth quarter saw Edwardsville outscore the Jaguars 10-2 as the Tigers went on to their 60-21 win.

Allen led the Tigers with 15 points, while Tillman scored nine points, Curry hit for eight points Stump added on seven points, both Epenesa and Robinson had six points each, Crosby and Kody Moore scored four points apiece and Alec Marchetto had a single point.

Kirkman led the Jaguars with seven points, while Harris scored six points, Bhupendra Dura and Shakaid Zevelun had three points each and Trent Shelton hit for two points.

Gateway is now 4-5 on the season, while the Tigers are now 5-5 and face Riverview Gardens of north St. Louis County at home Monday night in a 7:30 p.m. start, then play Parkway South of west St. Louis County in the opening round of the Mary Institute-

Country Day Holiday Tournament at MICDS Friday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. The Tigers face a tough opening part of their schedule, played well and Battas feels that the early competition will help in the tournament and beyond.

"Wins are always good and we know our schedule was really front-loaded with really good teams," Battas said. "I think we played three or four teams that are ranked in their respective states. And so, any opportunity you have a chance to compete is good, obviously, a chance to get to win is good and I just think it helps our mindset of our guys. Practice will be better next week heading into our Holiday tournament will be good, when the guys mix there in a really good spot. And they know we had a tough schedule to start, but I think they're optimistic about moving forward."

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