

# **Morningstar Leads With 13 Points, Hoover, Weller Add Nine Each As Edwardsville Uses Good Defense To Defeat Belleville West 39-27**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
January 11 2023 2:16 PM





EDWARDSVILLE - Kaitlyn Morningstar led the way with 13 points, while both Zay Hoover and Emerson Weller added nine points each as Edwardsville used its defense to help overcome a poor shooting night to defeat Belleville West in a Southwestern Conference girls' basketball game 39-27 Tuesday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.



The Tigers have now won five of their last six games and are now 8-9 overall going into a key rematch Thursday evening at Alton. On this night, Edwardsville used good defense and rebounding to help in the win over the Maroons.

"We did a good job rebounding throughout the game and was part of the defensive end," said Tigers' head coach Caty Happe. "We've gotta clean some things up, obviously, but it's always good to come out with a win."

The Tigers have had some of their players in and out of practice and games, due to other commitments, and it's given some of the other players a chance to gain some playing time and show what they can do.

"We love that a lot of our kids are multi-sport athletes," Coach Happe said. "It puts us in a hole at the beginning, but great to overcome. It gave opportunities to other kids to step up and gave them minutes. So, in the long run, it's just going to help us."

The Tigers did have an off-night shooting but did get the points they needed at key times to keep West at bay.

"It was a poor shooting night for us all the way around," Happe said. "So, like I said, to come out with a win is a good thing. But understanding the game and time and score are



important things for us, so I thought, at times, we gave up easy things, but at times, I thought we did some really good things as well. It's just putting that all together."



The Tigers did play good defense in the first half, allowing only nine points, but West managed to put on a bit of a comeback in the second half, as Edwardsville turnovers helped the Maroons.

"I thought we guarded them a lot better in the first half, how we wanted to," Happe said. "In the second half, it kind of got away from us with our turnovers."

Edwardsville did have some anxious moments late in the game but played well to overcome the problems.

"Absolutely," Happe said. "So we talked about pretty much all these are putting us in different situations and that's going to make us more successful in the long run. So as long as we learn from those and I think we did. After I called that time out and talked about things a little more. But that's on the coaching end; I've got to understand. We've got to do a lot more teaching, too."

The Tigers took the lead on an early free throw by Hoover and that was the game's only point for about four minutes before Weller connected on a free throw with 3:20 left in the period to make it 2-0. Hoover hit the first basket in the lane with 1:25 left to make it

4-0 and Morningstar scored off a rebound late to make the score 6-0 for Edwardsville after the first quarter. Ja'Mya Company scored the first points for West early in the second quarter, with Morningstar hitting back-to-back baskets to extend the lead to 10-2. Jalynn Rook hit a three to cut the lead to 10-5 and Company scored in the lane to make it 10-7, but then the Tigers, led by Hoover and Ellie Neath, went on a 7-2 run to close out the first half to give Edwardsville a 17-9 lead at the interval.

Weller and Morningstar scored from inside early in the third to increase the Tigers' lead to 21-11 and after an exchange of baskets, the Tigers got a basket from Weller and three free throws from Morningstar to extend the lead to 28-14, with another exchange before the end of the quarter putting Edwardsville ahead 30-18. In the fourth, Aniyla Branson and Rook led a Maroon charge that cut the lead to 34-23, but West could get no closer as the Tigers outscored the Maroons 5-4 to take their 39-27 win.

To go along with Morningstar's 13 points and Hoover and Weller's nine points, Neath scored four points and both Lainey McFarlin and Mia Semeth had two points each. The Maroons were led by Rook's nine points, while Company had eight points, Keyara Baerga-Plumey hit for six points and both Branson and Lauren King scored two points apiece.

The Maroons are now 2-14, while the Tigers go to 8-9 and travel to Alton for their rematch against the undefeated Redbirds Thursday night at 7:30 p.m., then host Westminster Christian of west St. Louis County next Tuesday at 7 p.m., then go to West County to play Whitfield in another 7 p.m. game. Happe is looking ahead to the rematch at the Redbirds Nest.

"It'll be a good game," Happe said about Thursday night's contest that will be [live on Riverbender.com](http://live.onriverbender.com).

"It was a good game the first time and we'll make some adjustments and they'll make some adjustments, but excited to get to see them again. It should be a good game for sure."



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