

Kloster Leads Way With 15 Points, Tigers Have Three Players In Double Figures in 57-40 Win Over Alton, Everage Hits 17 For Redbirds

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EDWARDSVILLE - Isayah Kloster led Edwardsville with 15 points and was of three Tiger players to score in double figures as Edwardsville defeated Alton 57-40 in a Southwestern Conference boys basketball game played Friday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Tigers have now won three in a row, six of their last seven and nine of their last 11 games and are now 12-7 on the year, while the Redbirds fell to 3-15 on the season.

Alton used its defense to try to minimize the Tigers' three-point shooting, but the Tigers looked more to work the ball inside during the game to get Malik Allen some shots.

"They mixed some different defenses at us," said Edwardsville head coach Dustin Battas. "We still want to try to get Malik some shots; we've been working on that. Malik did a really good job of taking what the defense gave him. We had 17 assists tonight and Malik was a big part of that. We're hoping that, as our team gets better, we're able to take advantage of mismatches or try to counter what the defense is doing, so tonight and against Belleville West, they really wanted to take Malik away, so that opens up some things for some of our other guys."

Kloster took advantage to score his 15 points and played well throughout the game.

"Yes, we really want to go to Isayah," Battas said, "especially against a team like Alton, who's fast, but doesn't have a bunch of size. So we worked on that all week. I thought A. J. Tillman was excellent just creating angles to attack downhill. looks like he had five assists and he keeps getting better and better. Actually, in the first quarter, we only scored 10; I thought we were running our offense well, we were getting some shots that were rimming out on us, so we consistently kept having good possessions. Only had eight turnovers for the night; our goal is always 10 or less. So overall, good offensive night and credit to our guys for executing things and playing very unselfish."



The Tigers have been playing well during their nine-of-11 streak, but Battas isn't concerned about that, but takes a day-to-day approach.

"We really don't get too caught up in the big picture," Battas said, "we take it day-by-day and evaluate individual players and also evaluate the team and we've changed a few things and have had a few different lineups for different teams. We like where we're at and have a good combination of players that all contribute and bring something valuable to the team and the guys have really been doing an excellent job of practicing well and preparing well and that's, fortunately, showing its head when the games come around."

The Tigers got off to a great start and never looked back and the Redbirds kept playing hard all throughout but missed lay-ups and easy baskets in the first half eventually cost Alton in the long run.

"Extremely disappointed," said first-year Redbird coach Dylan Dudley. "Just really disappointed. Not so much disappointed with our kids' efforts. We've shown it to some of our kids. Most of our kids, from freshmen to junior, and sophomore to senior this year, have shown some fight. You have to hang in the game, you've got to fight when it gets hard and I kind of thought they took some steps in that direction. But the disappointing thing is, our game plan and my opinion and our stats' opinion were spot on. We're getting the ball right to the basket. We missed 10 lay-ups in the first half. And if you miss 10 lay-ups, you're probably going to make seven of them. That's 14 points. Well, you go into the halftime up. And what people need to understand our game flow, we make those seven, probably seven of those 10 we missed, we have three guys by the basket, they get a transition run out, they get a lay-up, Malik gets an early three, he gets into it. So it's multiple swings. It's a seven, eight-point swing just off our missed lay-ups, so that's the disappointing thing. You have to make lay-ups when you get to the basket."

The Redbirds did have good things happen, and Jamion Everage was the top scorer for Alton with 17 points. The players are still working hard and Dudley is very pleased with their efforts.

"Yeah, we're not discouraged," Dudley said. "The last two people I talked to, I told them we're not discouraged. It's really disappointing because losing (stinks). I'm not a very good loser and I'm not sure anybody on our coaching staff is a good loser, right? But the two things I will say is that I appreciate our coaching staff more than they know because as a head coach, you need guys that you trust and you need guys that are going to hold you accountable. But at the same time, you kind of need guys to keep you in the right frame of mind, to kind of understand the bigger picture and I'm blessed with three really, really, really good assistant coaches, but more importantly, three really, really, really good dudes."

Dudley also praised Everage for coming back so well after some early season difficulties.

"And in regards to Jamion, Jamion has had his struggles up and down," Dudley said. "He transfers from Marquette (Catholic), comes to our place, has a good first game and then, some swings start to go. He was away from our team for a while, due to some disciplinary action. He came back, and held himself accountable. He's seen some success the last two games. But I'm proud of Jamion, because change is hard. And I've been really, really hard on Jamion, because he's a senior and he needs to be held

accountable. But this is for his life. And this is for him to set himself up to be successful in life, because he's a good kid and he's a good student. He's got good parents. So I'm proud of him for trying to get better at this stuff that we've asked him to get better at off the court. And I'd like to think some of his successes off the court are starting to carry over on the court."

The Tigers jumped out to a 5-0 lead at the start on a Kloster basket and an Allen three before the Redbirds got baskets from Kobe Taylor and Hassani Elliot to cut the lead to 5-4. Edwardsville got another basket from Kloster and three from Allen to go ahead 10-4 after the first quarter. At the start of the second, Kloster and Tillman scored and Jake Curry canned a three to give the Tigers a 17-4 lead, capping off a 12-0 run. Everage ended the run by hitting a floater that made it 17-6 and after a Kloster basket, Blake Hall and Everage hit back-to-back threes, the second at the halftime buzzer to cut the Tiger lead to 21-12 at halftime.

The teams traded baskets, with Byron Stampley, Jr. hitting a three, to start the second half, with the two teams trading baskets made it 27-17 for Edwardsville, the Tigers went on a 6-3 run to make it 33-20, with Iose Epenesa and Tillman leading the charge. Later on, Kloster and Allen led another charge that made the score 39-26 after three quarters. In the fourth. Edwardsville extended their lead to 48-27 and to 52-31, but the Redbirds put on a late rally, outscoring the Tigers 8-2 led by Everage, but the Tigers prevailed in their 57-40 win.

To go along with Kloster's 15 points, Allen had 11 points for the Tigers, Tillman came up with 10 points, Curry had five points, Johnnie Robinson scored four points, both Montrez West and Jonathan Stump hit for three points and Kris Crosby and Epenesa had two points each. In addition to Everage's 17 points, Stampley scored 11 points, Taylor had seven points, Hall had three points and Elliott scored two points.

