



# Edwardsville Boys Basketball Seniors Celebrate Final Home Game, Are iCAN Clinic Male Athletes Of Month

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EDWARDSVILLE - Six seniors for the Edwardsville boys basketball team - Montrez West, Johnnie Robinson, Braylon Heavens, Isayah Kloster, Kody Moore and Jonathan Stump - celebrated their Senior Night in pregame ceremonies before the Tigers' 57-45 loss to Belleville West in the regular season finale Feb. 17 at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The six seniors and their families, along with the senior cheerleaders and dance team members and their families, were all honored and thanked for their contributions to the programs in their four years at Edwardsville High School and after the game, the players took time to talk about their memories and what they learned playing for the team.

"I grinded four hard years to get to this moment," Moore said. "So you've got to enjoy it while it lasts. We're ready to come back on Wednesday, compete and win the regionals at Quincy. But it is what it is."

The most important thing that Moore learned as a Tiger was a very important one indeed.

"You put the team first before the player," Moore said. "You've got to work, day in and day out. Every practice is hard, every practice is long. But you've just got to keep on working. You can't stop."

The Tigers finished the regular season at 20-11, winning 14 of their final 18 games and achieved much in a season where there were many questions about the team. Moore was very proud of the team's accomplishments.

"It's good," Moore said. "I always thought we could do something with this team. This year, we were 6-6 at the Christmas tournament (at Mary Institute-Country Day School in suburban St. Louis), we somehow won 20 games, we won 14 out of our last. We just put it together, we just won. I think we can win more."

When asked about a favorite memory of being with the team, Moore mentioned a common thing among all the seniors.

"Just having fun with the team," Moore said. "After every win, gas station," he said with a smile.

As for the future, Moore is planning to study journalism at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

Heavens also was very happy with how the season turned out.

"I'm feeling pretty good," Heavens said. "It has been a good experience to be on the team and make friends and I built relationships with the group on the team."

Heavens' takeaway from playing for the Tigers is also a very positive one as well.

"I think I learned how to handle pressure more," Heavens said, "be calmer and turn that situation, so it definitely helped with that and become a better person."

Heavens also had a similar favorite memory as well.

"As Kody said, the gas station rides home," Heavens said, "when you're on the ride home with all your teammates, is a real good time I liked that."

Heavens is hoping to study computer science, with a minor in film or music, in college and is currently considering Washington University in St. Louis, where he also may play basketball if it's possible, but also plans on running on the track and field team.

Stump's also felt that the Tigers played well this season and enjoyed being with his teammates.

"It's been a good season together, just playing with all my friends and brothers out here," Stump said. "We're all one big family, so we're all so proud of our effort all season. We're still looking to come out strong for the postseason."

The family atmosphere is a very strong part of not only the team but of the entire Edwardsville athletic program and it's something Stump very much appreciates.

"Yeah, it definitely has," Stump said. "It's a long season and it's a hard grind, but knowing that you have your best friends out there with you, attacking together is really something that makes you feel good."

Stump had the same favorite memory of playing for Edwardsville.

"I think just all the bus rides and gas station trips together," Stump said, "celebrating after a win and just hooping and hollering, kind of fooling around on the bus together. So it's been fun."

The one lesson Stump takes away from four years with the Tigers?

"The hard work that goes into it," Stump said. "Coach (Dustin) Battas has us prepared hard every game, every day, with the same high intensity and I can just carry that over into more aspects of my life outside of basketball."

Stump will be playing basketball at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pa., in suburban Philadelphia and plans to major in computer science.

Kloster felt many emotions going through his mind following the final game.

"I was pretty emotional," Kloster said. "It feels good, though, thinking about the past couple of years and all the home games I've had, all the other games I've had. So it's pretty cool, but definitely a lot of emotions."

Kloster also expressed a similar takeaway from his years playing for the Tigers.

"Just working hard," Kloster said. "They really taught me how to work hard, no matter what and no matter what's going on in your life, no matter what your battle, just keep working hard and keep seeing it through."

The family atmosphere also helped Kloster greatly in his time at Edwardsville High.

"Everything for the past four years has really felt like a family," Kloster said, "and something I would never go back and trade."

When asked about a favorite memory, Kloster thought about it a bit before choosing one.

"I don't know, I had so many," Kloster said with a smile. "One of them is probably winning against East St. Louis my freshman year. I never had my best game against East St. Louis and that was such a big game for us and it really started a lot of really close friendships I've had over the years. And that's kind of where it all started."

Kloster plans to continue playing basketball in college and major in social sciences but has not made a decision on where he'll go to school at.

Robinson wasn't sure about how he felt in his final home game and was looking ahead to the start of the postseason, where the Tigers will play against Collinsville in an IHSA Class 4A regional tournament at Quincy's Blue Devil Gym.

"I'm feeling like - I mean, I don't really know how to think right now," Robinson said. "I'm not going to lie because the season's over. I wish we would have won the game, but at the same time, I kind of like, it's better to prepare for next week. Just get back to work and everything. But I'm feeling really good going into the postseason. I'm excited."

Like many of the other seniors, Robinson is taking very positive things away from playing for the Tigers.

"Oh, man," Robinson said with a smile and laugh. "Being mature. I've actually gotten way more mature on this basketball team than I ever did in, like, any other thing. Staying after school and everything for three hours and stuff."

Robinson's favorite memory of playing for the Tigers was a tournament the team played this past summer, in which many college coaches and recruiters attended that showcased many players in both the area and region.

"I'd probably say that tournament we did over the summer," Robinson said. "It was like we had all the college coaches out here. It was really fun. We just came in and played games and played as a team and as a family."

Robinson recently signed a letter of intent to play football at Quincy University and he's looking forward to the chance to play football for the Hawks.

"Yes, sir, I really am looking forward to that," Robinson said with a smile and laugh. "Ready to get to work."

Robinson also thanked the Tiger coaching staff and his teammates for helping him become a better player.

"Just thank you to all the coaches," Robinson said. "Coach Battas, coach (Eric) Smith, coach (Bryan) Young, coach (Noah) Jacobs and all the other players that came in, like Shawn Roundtree and Jack Marinko and all of them. And all my teammates."

West was also very happy with the team's body of work and how the season went for the Tigers.

"West said: "At the end of the day, we had a great season, as last year, we didn't do what we wanted. But this year has been a great comeback and I'm excited to see what we do in the playoffs."

West, like the other seniors, was looking forward to the postseason opportunities and what lies ahead for Edwardsville.

"Yes, sir, just ready for all the hard work and preparation we're about to do," West said, "and hopefully, we just continue to win and get the dub."

West will also take away very important life lessons in his four years playing for the Tigers.

"Just always work hard," West said, "and always just do the right thing. And you work hard and everything else will follow."

West is also appreciative of the support from the Edwardsville community and the fans as well.

"Edwardsville's a great community," West said. "I always felt loved and supported and it's just fun living here and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

His most favorite memory is something he accomplished in one of this season's games.

"Probably this season, hitting, like, four threes in a game," West said. "All the excitement on the bench, everybody cheering me on. It was just a great moment."

West plans to play baseball in college and will be a member of the Tigers' team that will defend its state Class 4A championship this season. but hasn't decided on a college as of yet. He plans to major in sports management.