



# Edwardville's Girls Volleyball Team Starts Season Off On High Note, Defeats O'Fallon 25-18, 25-18

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville High School girls volleyball team got off to a great start with a convincing 25-18, 25-18 win over arch-rival O'Fallon in the opening match of the 2023 season Tuesday evening at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Tigers were able to use good overall play and overcome mistakes to take the Southwestern Conference win over the Panthers and get started off on the right foot.

"This game let us kind of see what the last three weeks we've been preparing for," said Edwardsville head coach Heather Ohlau. "As our first match and especially a conference match, I think the girls came out as a must-win, just to set the tone. They did great. We still have some work to do, but I think where we're at at the start of the season, just lays that foundation for what we need to improve on."

The Edwardsville seniors, who lost in the sectional semifinal to the Panthers last year at Belleville West, had been looking to this match for quite some time, and on Tuesday, proved they were ready to play.

"Yeah, last year left some unfinished business," Ohlau said. "I think it left a lot to be desired and they want to make that statement. Each year, each class wants to make a statement and leave their legacy. So, this senior group is one that is able to do that."

The setters and hitters are working in sync to get the best shots possible and Ohlau feels that they'll be a key to the team this year.

"Our setters have a lot to look at," Ohlau said. "We have a wide variety of attackers that can put the ball away in a variety of different sets. We've been working at keeping a little bit faster tempo and speed and just spreading our offense."







There were a number of first-match mistakes that could have been easily corrected, but Edwardsville was able to shrug off the mistakes and keep focusing on the job ahead.

"I just think being able to shake off a mistake," Ohlau said. "We've been focusing on controlling what you can control and moving on to the next ball. That, I think, they took to heart and every chance that they got, they just kept pushing."

Another key part of the match was that the Tigers were able to keep their rallies alive, which helped lead to a marvelous team win.

"I think our defense has been working on keeping the ball alive until our hitters are able to put the ball away," Ohlau said.

It wasn't the most auspicious start for the Tigers, as the opening serve of the season went long to give the Panthers a 1-0 lead. After that, Edwardsville took a 3-1 lead before O'Fallon came back to tie the first set 3-3. Sara Gouy then served up five points in a row, as both Sydney Davis and Madelyn Ohlau took charge and scored key winners to put the Tigers up 8-3, forcing an O'Fallon time-out. After the time out, the teams exchanged points that brought the score to 13-11 for the Tigers, with the margin staying at three points in favor of Edwardsville. At 17-14, Gouy went on another service streak as the Tigers, behind the play of Davis, Shelby Lee and Addie Reader, extended the lead

to 20-13 and later 24-17. After the Panthers scored to make it 24-18, Lee brought down the kill to give the Tigers the win at 25-18 and a one-set lead in the match.

The two teams started the second set by exchanging points, with O'Fallon taking its first lead of the match at 6-4. The Tigers were able to gain a 9-9 tie later on, then scored five on the next seven points to take a 14-11 lead. A Lee kill and a Panther violation eventually brought the score to 17-12, forcing another O'Fallon time-out, after which Alli Hamm helped bring the Panthers to within 17-15, with the two teams exchanging points to make it 18-16. From there, the Tigers scored seven of the match's final nine points, getting great play from Davis, who made a number of key kills to make the score 24-18. Hanna Matarelli then served out the match with the final point to give the Tigers the 25-18 win and a two-set sweep.

Davis came up with nine kills, to go along with five from Lee, while both Matarelli and Gouy served up six points each, Liv Johnes had six digs, with Matarelli adding four and Gouy had eight assists, while Lee had four.

The Panthers are now 1-1 on the season, while the Tigers open up at 1-0 and play another conference tilt Thursday night at home against Collinsville at 5:30 p.m. Ohlau is hopeful that things will continue to go in the right direction against the Kahoks.

"A little bit more of the same," Ohlau said, "hopefully, a little bit more improvement in our serve-receive passing, a little bit more consistency with our attacks, mixing up our shots. But just keeping the momentum going. It was a great first win."



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