

Young Edwardsville Girls Basketball Team Gets 19 Points From McFarlin, 15 From Semith, But Lose To Breese Central 53-42 In Opener

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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O'FALLON - A young Edwardsville girls' basketball team got 19 points from Lainey McFarlin and 15 points from Mia Semeth, and played well at times, but Breese Central went on a pair of runs to help defeat the Tigers 53-42 in the Southern Illinois Girls Shootout Series Saturday afternoon at the OTHS Panther Dome in O'Fallon.

The Cougars used an early 13-4 run at the start of the game, then after the Tigers had gotten to within 34-32 in the third, went on an 8-2 run to open the gap to 42-34 after the third and held off the Tigers in the fourth to take the win.

It was another learning experience for the younger Tiger players, but first-year head coach Bryan Young was happy with the way the team played.

"I am pretty encouraged," Young said in a postgame interview.

"Like I said, they did play tough. It's a tough loss because that's a tough team. But I thought we did well, just couldn't quite get the stop we needed or a basket we needed, but that's part of the process. We're still learning and growing, so I am pleased with our effort."

Young felt it was growing pains, with turnovers and bad plays at inopportune times, were partly to blame for the Tigers' loss.

"Yeah, it's just growing pains," Young said.

"It's still learning each other and learning the plays and the execution of stuff. But like I said, I'm encouraged from game one to game two. I told them after the game it was a step in the right direction. We didn't go backward today, That's a pretty good basketball team put out by the state champions and we stepped up today."

Not having the team's regular point guard, Ellie Neath, who was out due to a previous commitment, wasn't an ideal situation for the Tigers, but the other players stepped up and played well.



"Not having our point guard," Young said, "she kind of our catalyst, a two-year starter, she had another obligation today, and I thought our girls stepped up. Some of the girls had to play different roles today, and so, it made the flow a little bit and made some of them a little hesitant, because they all played different positions. But you know what? It's all I could ask, to go out there and give their best, and they did that."

Both Semith and McFarlin have gotten off to a great start to the season, and it bodes very well for the Tigers down the road.

"We talked about that before the season started," Young said. "I said they've been putting in the work, and you could tell like they want it. They want it bad. The good thing about it, they're just sophomores. So they're still learning, too. They haven't had a lot of varsity playing time before this year."

"Obviously, with their play on the floor, you could see the work, and it's going to be very interesting to see them grow over the season," Young continued.

"I thought Ava Skelton came off the bench today and gave us good minutes. I like that, encouraging. And I thought Lydia (Struble), who had just played her first game and came off from a concussion, she did well. And Sophie Shapiro, as a freshman, was thrown in the fire today and I'm encouraged by her. That's a big job, that's hard to do as a freshman to go out there on the floor and play varsity minutes. And she's handling that real well. She's going to be a good one for us."

After an exchange of baskets to start the game, the Cougars went on their early run and Claire Albers hit a three and after McFarlin scored inside to make the score 5-4, Lexy Santel and a pair of baskets from Kaydence Schroeder put Central up 11-4, forcing the Tigers to call a time out. A basket from Taylor Trame put the Cougars further up 13-4, but Edwardsville got to within 13-9 on a three from McFarlin and a basket by Olivia Kolnsberg, but Central outscored the Tigers 4-2 in the remainder of the period to go up 17-11 after one.

When the second quarter started, Edwardsville got to within 19-17 at the start, but Schroeder, Trame, and Albers all combined to help Central extend the lead to 29-17. The teams then scored four points each for the rest of the quarter to give the Cougars a 33-21 lead at halftime.

A Cece Toennies free throw at the start of the second half put Central in front 34-21, and the Tigers, led by a three-point play by Semith and a pair of threes from McFarlin, came to within 34-32 and threatening to take the lead. The Cougars, led by key baskets from Trame and a three from Kylie Rakers, ended the rally and took a 42-34 lead after three.

In the fourth, the Cougars were able to hold off Tiger rallies and hit key free throws to help give Central its 53-42 win.

To go along with McFarlin's 19 points and Semith's 15, the Tigers' Gabby Cook scored four points and both Shapiro and Kolnsberg had two points each.

Central is currently 2-0, while Edwardsville is now 0-2 following a season-opening loss at Pleasant Plains by the same 53-42 score, in which McFarlin scored 18 points and Semeth added 12 points.

The Tigers face Springfield in their home opener Monday at 7:30 p.m., then host Breese Mater Dei Catholic in a Wednesday afternoon home game at 3 p.m., then host Reitz Memorial Academy of Evansville, Ind., on Friday at 10:30 a.m.



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