

Semith Leads With 16, Neath Adds 13, Edwardsville Uses Defense To Help Hold Off Highland Rally, Wins 40-36

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EDWARDSVILLE - Mia Semith led Edwardsville with 16 points, while Ellie Neath had her best game of the young season, scoring 13 points, as the Tigers used strong defense to help thwart a Highland fourth-quarter comeback to take a 40-36 win in a game played Tuesday evening at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The Tigers jumped out to a nine-point lead after the first quarter, but Highland came back to within one or two points during the course of the game. But in the end, good defense and clutch shooting helped give the Tigers the win.

It was a very good bounce-back win for Edwardsville, coming off a loss at home to Reitz Memorial Academy of Evansville, Ind., on Saturday afternoon. On Tuesday, the defense helped spell the difference in the game.

"We had a plan going in to pressure them a bunch through the whole game," said Tigers' head coach Bryan Young. "We got in foul trouble there in the second quarter, so we came out in the third quarter and I thought we cooled off a little bit. And then, we decided to start attacking them late in the third quarter and then, put some pressure on them. I thought that really got us out to a lead and gave us a little bit of ease."

Semith has emerged as one of the most important players on the Tigers. and her hard work during the off-season is beginning to pay off big dividends.

"She's been awesome, she's been fantastic," Young said about Semith.

"She's putting in the work outside of practice, and it's really showing. To be honest with you, I still like Mia being a little bit more aggressive sometimes, too. But she's young and she'll get there. She showed tonight that when she really wants to, she is hard to guard."

Neath had a good game as well, hitting on clutch shots when needed and contributing to the Tigers' defensive effort.





"I've been on Ellie a bunch of times about just being that three-year starter and carrying this team," Young said, "because we're going to need her against some really good teams to handle pressure and help some of these other girls fight through some of those situations."

"That's the first time all year that we've had the lead like that, and then, when you have the lead, you've got to have some composure and not take good shots and not get in a hurry. And I thought she was really calm to their comeback tonight."

Overall, it was indeed a very good win for the Tigers, especially coming off the loss to Reitz Memorial over the weekend.

"Like I said, I told the girls wins are hard to come by," Young said. "And we haven't been in that situation yet this year, because down the wire, we had to make some plays. And then, we had some key girls step up and make some free throws, and that's what good basketball looks like. You've got to be able to close out when you get that opportunity."

The Tigers jumped out with some good defense and shooting to take a 13-4 lead on the Bulldogs after the first quarter, with Semith canning a three at the start of the second to make it 16-4. A three-point play and a pair of free throws from Larissa Taylor cut the

lead to 16-9 and it started an 8-4 run for Highland, led by Lauren Maas, who saw the Tigers' lead go down to 19-15 at halftime.

At the start of the second half, Taylor almost immediately hit a three at the top of the key to cut the Edwardsville lead to 19-18. A pair of baskets from Semith and Sophie Shapiro brought the lead back to 23-18, and Edwardsville maintained the lead through the rest of the period, taking a 31-24 lead after the third after Lainey McFarlin scored on a drive through the lane and before the buzzer.

At the start of the fourth quarter, Abby Schultz and Chloe Gould scored three straight baskets to cut the lead to 31-30. A basket by Semith and a free throw from McFarlin upped the lead to 36-32 with 1:58 left in regulation. From there, the Tigers outscored the Bulldogs 6-4 to make the final 42-36 for the Tigers.

Semith led the Tigers with 16 points, with Neath scoring 13 points, McFarlin, Shapiro, and Blakely Hockett all had four points each and Gabby Cook scored a single point.

Taylor led the Bulldogs with 20 points, while Maas had 16 points, Schultz scored four points and Sophia Fleming scored two points.

The Bulldogs are now 2-5 on the year and play their next two games at home, against Mascoutah Friday night at 6 p.m., then host Belleville West Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m. Highland then goes to Jersey Dec. 8 and Breese Mater Dei Catholic on the road Dec. 11, both games starting at 7:30 p.m.

The Tigers improve to 2-4 and open their Southwestern Conference campaign at Alton Thursday night at 7:30 p.m. Edwardsville will then play twice at home, Dec. 5 against O'Fallon and Dec. 7 against Belleville East, with both games starting at 7:30 p.m.