

Allen Scores 16 Points, Tigers Hold Steady, Gives Collinsville First Loss Of Season 42-38 In Southwestern Conference Thriller

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EDWARDSVILLE – Malik Allen led Edwardsville with 16 points as the Tigers held the top Collinsville players to a total of 31 points as Edwardsville won over the Kahoks 42-38 in a Southwestern Conference thriller on a snowy Friday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

Edwardsville won a closely-contested game that dealt Collinsville its first loss of the season, dropping the Kahoks to 17-1 on the year, while the Tigers went up to 11-6 this season.

The Edwardsville defense did a masterful job of holding Collinsville's top players to a total of 31 points, which was a key in the game.

“Obviously, we feel happy for our guys,” said Tigers head coach Dustin Battas. “I told them after the game ‘you worked so hard to feel like they felt, without working it off.’ The hard thing about sports is there’s no guarantee, You can work as hard, you can prepare, you can even play great, you can still lose to a really great team. Tonight was just kind of a perfect combination of we did the work, when the game started, we were ready to go, and we executed a lot of things well. And then, we were rewarded with that ultimate feeling at the end of a hard-fought basketball game. So, we’re just really proud of our guys tonight.”

The Tigers were able to shut down the Kahoks' top three players of Nick Horras, Jamorie Wysinger, and Zach Chambers very well.

“They’re really hard to guard,” Battas said, “because their players are good, and coach (Darin) Lee is really, really smart about how he uses them. So, a lot of that is heart by our guys, a lot of that is brains by our guys to take away some of that stuff; you can’t take all of it away. And we have a lot of respect for how good they are. So, unbelievable effort by our guys.





“I thought Malik and Herb (Martin) did a really good job on (Wysinger) and (Horras), Battas continued. “But Donovan (Coates) and A.J’s (Tillman) quick help was a difference in a lot of possessions, and Iose (Epenesa) and Kris (Crosby) tag-teaming on (Chambers) and rebounding their tails off. And Miccah (Butler) came in and was able to guard a couple of different positions, which gave our guys some rest that needed it. He was huge. And then at the end, just to show some extra effort by Donovan Coates, a couple of huge offensive rebounds, flying in there and getting those missed shots, keeping a possession alive. All of those little things, this is how you’re able to beat a team that’s really good, like Collinsville is.”

The win may probably be a big factor when the seedings for the IHSA Class 4A regional tournament comes up later this season.

“Yeah, there’s no doubt, every game’s important,” Battas said, “and you know, you just let the chips fall where they may by the end of the season. But we prepare and try to win every game. The conference title is still up for grabs. The way that we work is to continue to get better every practice, and tonight, I think, is an example of our growth. Maybe it helps our guys understand the big picture if why we work so hard and why we do what we do. Our players were awesome tonight. Players win games like tonight,

Coaches can practice and have schemes, but ultimately, it's going to come down to your players against their players, who can execute, who can make more plays. I thought our guys were amazing tonight.”

Collinsville did have a chance to tie the game and force overtime in the dying seconds, but missed an opportunity in a scramble underneath the Edwardsville basket, the ball going out and Edwardsville gaining possession.

“We got a chance to tie it,” Lee said. “Chase (Reynolds) had a chance to tie it in the corner, too, it just didn't fall. Right there at the end, just a couple of things could have tied the game, for sure.”

The Kahoks started well, with a pair of Horras free throws and a Chambers basket putting Collinsville up early at 4-0. Tillman and Horras then traded threes to make the score 7-3 for Collinsville, with another Horras basket making it 9-3. Allen then hit back-to-back threes to tie the game 9-9, and a basket by Horras before the end of the first quarter gave the Kahoks a 13-11 lead.

The second quarter stayed tight, with Collinsville leading for much of the period, but a late three by Tillman gave Edwardsville their first lead of the night at 21-19. A pair of baskets by Horras and Chambers gave the Kahoks a 23-21 lead at halftime.

Stanley Carnahan and Wysinger scored at the start of the second half to extend the Collinsville lead to 27-21, The Tigers then went on a 7-0 run to take the lead at 28-27, with a Chambers free throw and Wysinger three giving Collinsville the lead back at 31-28, The Tigers then went into a slowdown mode, and a pair of free throws by Coates and a Tillman basket gave the Tigers the lead at 32-31 at the end of the third.

A Coates three at the start of the final quarter gave Edwardsville a 35-31 edge, and later in the period, a Crosby basket gave the Tigers a 39-34 lead. Collinsville came back to within 40-38 on a free throw with nine seconds left, and got the ball back on a turnover. On the ensuing play, the Kahoks lost the ball on a scramble, and Tillman hit a pair of free throws with 2.1 seconds left to seal the win for Edwardsville at 42-38,

Allen led the way for the Tigers with 16 points, while Tillman added nine points, Epenesa had six points, Coates scored five points, Martin had three points and Crosby scored two points.

Horras led the Kahoks with 12 points, with Chambers having 11 points, Wysinger was held to eight points, Reynolds scored three points and both Carnahan and Tyree Brister had two points each.

Collinsville is now 17-1 and returns home to Vergil Fletcher Gym to play Alton on Tuesday night, then play at Belleville East next Friday before going up against St. John Vianney Catholic of Kirkwood, Mo., in a shootout at Belleville Althoff Catholic on Jan. 13, with all games starting at 7:30 p.m.

Edwardsville is now 11-6, and hosts Belleville West on Tuesday, then plays at Alton next Friday, both games starting at 7:30 p.m., before playing in the Jersey Mid-Winter Classic round-robin tournament at Havens Gym in Jerseyville, going against Cahokia, the host Panthers and Granite City starting on Jan. 15.



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