



Coates Leads The Way With 11 Points, Tigers Defeat Waterloo 49-41 On Senior Night

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Donovan Coates led the way for Edwardsville with 11 points, and Iose Epenesa added on 10 points, as the Tigers used an 11-1 third-quarter run to take a 40-31 lead, and also sank a vital three in the fourth quarter to end a Waterloo run to take a 49-41 win over the Bulldogs in the final non-conference boys basketball game of the regular season Tuesday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

It was also Edwardsville's senior night, and the Tigers' seniors – A.J. Tillman, Malik Allen, Kris Crosby, and SaDonald West – and their families were all honored, thanked, and saluted for their contributions to the program during the past four years. And on a night where Edwardsville only could connect on two threes in the game, they still found a way to win the game.

“We're glad that we won,” said Tigers' head coach Dustin Battas. “It was tough, they're a good team, and they play well. Those big guys are tough to guard, (Rodrigo Lopez-Tercero) stepped out and made a couple of threes. So we knew we'd have our hands full. They're going to make you play from the perimeter, because of the big guys. We had a hard time making threes, we weathered that. Only making two threes and still winning, I think, is a credit to our defense. And then, we made some timely shots in the fourth quarter there to push the lead. I thought Herbert (Martin)) and Donovan did some good things there late to make some baskets around the rim. And then, we tightened up the defense in the third quarter that gave us the lead.”

The Bulldogs' height, in which Waterloo's roster didn't have a player listed under six feet, gave the Tigers problems all night, but the 11-0 third-quarter run did play a key role in the Edwardsville win. The Tigers also withstood a Bulldog 8-0 run at the start of the fourth quarter to take the win.

“Big part,” Battas said. “We had a good third quarter. We talked at halftime we needed to fix some things on defense, I thought their post-play was hurting us. Offensively, they switched to a two-three zone, which we talked about trying to attack that a little bit better. So yeah, we fixed a few things, the guys executed well in the third quarter, but that 11-0 run was big.”





The Tigers also wanted to execute better in space, and was able to do that well.

“Yeah, that was our plan tonight,” Battas said, “was to try to get out in space. Sometimes, that’s easier said than done, you’ve got to rebound first, you’ve got to take it out of the net, you’re not as fast. So we wanted to get rebounds and try to throw it ahead. We did that in spots, I just think we’ve got to get more consistent at that. And making threes makes everything better. They’ve got us stretched out to the arc in transition, and you’ve got guys running to the rim. And then, we had to play against a kind of packed in two-three zone, and it’s hard to push the ball and attack that. So, we’ll keep working on throwing the ball ahead, and maybe playing in some space, because to be effective, we want our guards to be able to play in space, and bring their defense out away from the basket.”

The zone defense that Waterloo played is something that’s not often seen in the Southwestern Conference, especially with two big men in Lopez-Tercero and Alex Stell, who’s listed as 6’ 10”.

“I think I’ve been coaching 18 years,” Battas said. “I think, one year with coach (Mike) Waldo, we played a team that had two eight guys. A lot of teams play only one big guy, even if they had two. They’re playing both at the same time, so defensively, the basket is really hard to get to. And we knew that, so we shot a lot of three-pointers. And then,

their ability to play inside, but then (Lopez-Tercero) stepping out and made the threes, you've got to guard the rebounds away from the basket and double the post. So it's a lot. It's an interesting match-up, and I'm glad we won. It's a good challenge for us."

The game started out with the two teams exchanging points that made the score 6-6, before the Tigers went on the opening run, An Allen free throw, plus baskets by Martin and Miccah Buter gave Edwardsville an 11-6 lead, forcing a Waterloo time out. Caleb Yochum swished a three for Waterloo, but Martin hit a floater in the lane at the end of the quarter to give the Tigers a 13-9 lead.

Both Crosby and Allen hit on baskets to open the second and give Edwardsville a 17-9 lead, but Waterloo fought back with a 10-0 run as a basket from Stell, two from Eli Schwehr, and a three from Lopez-Tercero gave Waterloo its first lead at 18-17. A free throw from Stell gave the Bulldogs a 19-17 lead, but a three-point play by Allen gave the Tigers the lead back at 20-19. The lead exchanged hands throughout the rest of the quarter, with Waterloo leading at halftime 23-22.

A pair of free throws from Lopez-Tercero increased the Waterloo lead to 25-22 at the start of the second half, but later on, a basket by Martin and Tillman hitting the first three of the game for Edwardsville gave the Tigers a 29-27 lead. After Lopez-Tercero hit another three to put Waterloo back on top 30-29, Edwardsville went to work, as a Tillman basket gave the Tigers back the lead at 31-30, then a three-point play off a steal by Allen, a basket from Epenesa, and a pair of baskets from Coates took the lead to 40-30. A free throw from the Bulldogs made the score 40-31 after three quarters.

Waterloo opened the quarter by continuing their 8-0 run, with Schwehr and Lopez-Tercero scoring and, also sank a three to cut the lead to 40-38. After a time-out, Coates put out the fire by hitting a vital three to make it 43-38, and from there, the Tigers outscored the Bulldogs 6-3 to take their 49-41 win.

In addition to Coates and Epenesa, Martin also had 10 points, Allen scored nine points, Tillman hit for five points, and both Crosby and Butler had two points each.

The Bulldogs were led by Lopez-Tercero's 20 points, while Stell and Schwehr both added five points each, Tyler DeVilder had three points, and Owen Niebruegge scored two points.

The Bulldogs are now 15-13, while the Tigers are now 17-10, and play their final home game of the regular season Friday night against East St. Louis, before winding up on the road, playing at Collinsville next Tuesday, and are at Belleville West Feb. 16, all games starting at 7:30 p.m.



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