

Dustin Battas looks to continue Tiger tradition as new head basketball coach

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Dustin Battas is preparing for his first season at the helm as the boys’ basketball coach of Edwardsville High School. And things are already looking good for the Tigers in preseason practice.

“Yes, we have great guys,” Battas said in a recent interview. “We have great guys that work hard every day, and they’re excited to be here so that enthusiasm kind of carries over. Things have been going great because of our senior leadership. We’ve got a lot of guys that haven’t necessarily been in games before, but they’ve been around the block, and they’ve been here for four years, and they know how we practice, and they know what the expectations are.

“Even in the fall, with weightlifting and open gym, those guys really set the bar high for the younger guys,” Battas also said. “So, yeah, it’s a great place to be right now, coaching at Edwardsville High School.”

Battas takes over the program from longtime head coach Mike Waldo, who’s now an assistant for the men’s team at SIU-Edwardsville, and Battas learned much from Waldo on philosophy and how to do things.

“There’s hopefully a lot of similarities between the way I see things and the way coach Waldo sees things and did things,” Battas said. “I think people’s personalities are a little bit different, but as far as our schemes, and the way you compete and win in high school basketball, he has the perfect blueprint for us to follow. So I think the main goal right now is for us to get better shots than the other team gets, take care of the basketball, and really practice well.

“The one thing I’ve learned from coach Waldo is how important practice was,” Battas continued. “Everything you do in practice should be meaningful, and everything you do in practice should hopefully carry over in games. And then the other stuff is you want your guys, one through 20 or one through 25 in your practice, is to all get something out of the program. The reality is that only seven or eight are going to play in the games, but you hope that your program is established to where they’re getting things out of it that will benefit them the rest of their lives, like work ethic and teamwork, and how to be competitive. And our guys definitely fit that mold.”

And at the same time, Battas is also looking forward to making his own mark of the Tiger program and keep the Edwardsville tradition of excellence going.

“Yeah, definitely,” Battas said. “This is a program that has a great reputation. We have a lot of former players that take a lot of pride in this program, and we certainly want to keep it that way. I don’t think about it all that much as far as pressure goes, but I do think about the pride in the program, and doing our best to represent the Edwardsville Tigers the best we can. And I couldn’t be more proud of the guys we have right now, because they do that to the fullest extent. They carry themselves great in the classroom,

they do things in the community that helps our community be a better place. So that Edwardsville Tiger tradition is hopefully going to stay the same, and we're going to do our best to uphold that every day."

And there is one big difference that Battas has noticed as the Tigers continue to work in anticipation of the season openers.

"We're excited to get to work," Battas said. "The big difference, everyone asks what the difference in from being an assistant coach to coach Waldo to this is, now, I'm the decision maker. It's really about it. So we'll try to keep things very similar to how coach Waldo did it. But now, I have to be the guy making the decisions instead of just suggesting things to coach Waldo. But the guys have been easy because they're so low maintenance. They just want to do good, and they like each other. So we've been able to coach basketball every day, and not have to manage behaviors and all that stuff, So it's been terrific so far."