

# Taylor scores 17, Hairston 14 as Kahoks pull away from Tigers in fourth

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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### **SEE CHRIS RHODES VIDEO BELOW:**

COLLINSVILLE – Ray’ Sean Taylor scored 17 points and Marshall Harrison added on 13 as Collinsville pulled away in the fourth quarter to defeat Edwardsville 51-31 in a Southwestern Conference boys basketball game Friday night at Vergil Fletcher Gym.

The Tigers came to within four in the third quarter, but the Kahoks used a 4-0 run at the end of the period, then outscored Edwardsville 17-5 in the fourth to get the win.

Edwardsville battled the entire game and executed its plan well.

“Yeah, you know, it feels a lot different than a 20-point game,” said Tigers coach Dustin Battas. “I feel like we were right there, and executed a lot of things that we wanted to well, We kind of cut it down to four, then it was a six-point game with two minutes left in the third with the ball. I really thought that our guys did a lot of things well to put us in that situation. And then, of course, in the fourth quarter, they spread us out a little bit with (Taylor), and that’s really hard to guard. We took a little page out of coach (Mike) Waldo’s playbook there with four corners and spread us out.

"So we know how hard that is to defend, and that lead got away from us a little bit. But I just told our guys I’m very proud of them. We like our guys, we like the mentality, we

like where we're at, although we're not winning a bunch of games in a row right now, we do like where we're at. We're getting better every day, and you couldn't ask for a better group of guys to work with."

Turnovers played a big part in the game, as Collinsville used a form of their famed press defense to create the turnovers, which led to some baskets.

"It's a little bit of a challenge, because Jaylon Tuggle is out right now with a little bit of a knee injury," Battas said. "He's our secondary ball handler, and we just found out today that he wasn't going to be able to go. So, I thought we had some other guys that stepped up."

One of them was Malik Robinson, who came in for praise from Battas.

"You know, Malik, he is a phenomenal, phenomenal guy," Battas said. "He weathered that storm for us pretty well, but at some point, we've just to get another guy ready – and we will. But it is, it's a great press. And coach (Darin) Lee obviously gets those guys playing hard, gets them in the right spot. We talked about it, we practiced it the last couple of days, and we made some adjustments at halftime, but it's really hard for Malik in certain situations. I thought he really, really tried his best to get us into our offense. And we'll get better."

Lee thought that his team was able to take the Tigers out of their offense and not allow easy baskets.

"Yeah, it was," Lee said about his team's performance. "Edwardsville does a lot of things well, they're very patient. And I thought we just did a good job just not giving them layups. That was very important; they do a good job with their offense."

Taylor's 17 points was another great game for the junior guard.

"He's a special player," Lee said. "He's very difficult to guard."

And Lee felt his seniors had very good games also.

"I thought our seniors did a nice job," Lee said. "Zane Baker defensively, he got his hands on the ball, Marshall Harrison, offensive glass, had a big game. And Kaydrian Jones got some buckets for us in the post."

The two sides started off by trading baskets in the opening moments, with the game being tied 5-5 after four minutes. Collinsville late in the term got baskets from Jones and Taylor, the latter off a steal from the press, to give the Kahoks a 9-5 lead after one. In

the second, Collinsville continued its run, getting the first six points from Cawhan Smith, Harrison and Baker to up the lead to 15-5 before Lavontas Hairston hit a three from the top of the key to make it 15-8. Collinsville then outscored Edwardsville 11-7 the rest of the quarter, getting a basket from Jones, a three from Taylor, another score from Smith and a three from Logan Carlisle. The Tigers countered with a basket from Robinson and another three from Hairston, but the Kahoks led at halftime 26-15.

Collinsville, behind Taylor and Harrison, got the lead to 30-21 before the Tigers made their move. A basket from Weller and three free throws from Nic Hemken cut the Kahok lead to 30-26, but Taylor hit twice late in the period to make it 34-26 at three quarter time.

Hairston did hit inside to cut the lead to 36-28 early in the final period, but Collinsville pulled away, outscoring the Tigers 15-3 the rest of the way as Taylor, Jones and Harrison all contributed to make the final 51-31.

Hairston led the Tigers with 14 points, the only Edwardsville player in double figures.

The Tigers carry seven seniors on its roster, and although not very experienced in games, work hard in practice and are ready to go when needed.

"I've been saying that we have a lot of new guys as far as what you see on the court," Battas said, "but we have a lot of guys that have been in the program for four years. They understand how we do things, although not very experienced in a game, they practice well, they prepare well, which is a big part of our success, always preparing. And so, yeah, it's not like we're starting from scratch. A few of our ball handlers are younger guys, so that's a little bit of a work in progress right now, but we've got a good group of guys, and they are getting better every day.

"I just told them if I could show them what they looked like three weeks ago, they'd be amazed, and we love it. Basketball's a long season, we're just trying to get better every day, and the way we're practicing and preparing have me feeling optimistic. I would feel very much different if the practice weren't good, and we had to manage behaviors. But these guys are really trying to get better every day, so we're encouraged by that. We'll get those things figured out as we keep looking."

Meanwhile, the Kahoks have started the season 8-1, losing only to East St. Louis on a buzzer beater on Tuesday night. Lee is very happy with the start.

"About as good as we can get," Lee said.

And Lee was also happy with the win as well.

“It was a good win for us,” Lee said. “A good conference win.”

The Tigers host defending IHSA Class 4A champion Belleville West on Tuesday night, while the Kahoks play at Alton next Friday night. Tip-off times for both games is 7:30 p. m.









[Chris Rhodes also contributed to this story.](#)