

# **Matt Stopka comes off the bench as role player to give Tigers a lift**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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O'FALLON – Every successful sporting team always has a role player that can come off the bench and give his or her team the lift it can need to give themselves the best opportunity to win.

With Edwardsville's boys' basketball team, senior Matt Stopka is one of those players who regularly come off the bench to provide the spark that helps the Tigers.

Although Edwardsville lost in the final seconds to O'Fallon Friday night 42-40 at the Panther Dome, Stopka came off the bench to help keep the Tigers in the thick of things. He also works hard in the practice sessions to prepare for whatever the team needs him to do.

"Well, you know, we practice hard," Stopka said in a postgame interview, "and we had a long week of practice for this game."

Stopka himself did some good things and describes his role for the Tigers off the bench as an enforcer-type player.

"I would kind of put it in a word as like an enforcer in a way," Stopka said. "Like, kind of go in there, and if we need a rebound in a tight situation, or if they've got a big guy that's coming in, so I think I just kind of go in there, and kind of throw my body around, really," he said with a smile.

And of course, do whatever needs to be done to make plays and get the job done.

The Tigers have had a tough season thus far, and are currently 3-11 after a Highland Shootout loss against Normal Community West. Stopka feels that the hard work the team puts in during their practices is ready to pay big dividends. And as the calendar turned into 2019 this past week, Stopka looks to continue doing his job and making positive contributions to the team.

"What I'm hoping to accomplish for myself is just kind of going in there, doing my job and giving ourselves the best chance to win," Stopka said, "in these tight game situations. You know, whether that's getting someone to screen, getting them open for a three, or coming in there and getting a rebound in a clutch situation."