

Kloster Scores First Seven Points In Last Period, Tillman's Free Throws With 6.7 Seconds Left Gives Tigers 41-39 Win Over Panthers

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O'FALLON - Isayah Kloster scored the first seven points of the fourth quarter to put Edwardsville ahead and A.J. Tillman sank a pair of free throws with 6.7 seconds left in regulation to give the Tigers a 41-39 win over O'Fallon in a Southwestern Conference boys basketball game played Friday night at the OTHS Panther Dome.

The game was a close one indeed, where the Panthers could never get more than eight points ahead, while Edwardsville played good defense throughout, holding the entire O'Fallon line up to single digits while shutting out O'Fallon's top scorer, Koby Wilmoth.

"Isayah's play was huge for us," said Edwardsville head coach Dustin Battas, "because of the way they were guarding our outside guys and A.J. was excellent down the stretch, taking care of the ball and hitting the free throws."

Kris Crosby and Johnnie Robinson did an excellent job keeping Wilmoth off the scoreboard throughout and Battas thought their play was key in the game as well.

"I thought our defense was excellent," Battas said, "and Kris and Johnnie held their best player to zero points."

It also helped that the Tigers had nearly a week to prepare for the game, and the players took full advantage of their prep time and were ready to play.

"We like our chances when we have five days to prepare," Battas said. "Our guys were really dialed in at practice this week and they were ready to go."

The most important thing in the game was it was Edwardsville's 12th win in their last 15 games and the Tigers are showing that they could be a team no one wants to play against when the postseason gets underway in the coming weeks.

"Our guys just keep playing," Battas said, "and we're playing our best basketball at the right time."





Kloster scored the Tigers' first two baskets to give Edwardsville an early 4-2 lead before a three gave O'Fallon their first lead at 5-4. After another Kloster basket that put the Tigers back up 6-5, the Panthers, led by Rini Harris, went on a 6-0 run to go ahead 11-6, with another Kloster basket making the score 11-8 at quarter time. In the second quarter, a Will Brown, Jr. three helped spark the Panthers to a 15-10 advantage, then O'Fallon, led by Brown, went on a 4-3 run to give O'Fallon a 19-12 lead before Tillman sank a three and Harris hit both ends of a one-and-one to give the Panthers a 21-15 lead at halftime.

After an exchange of baskets to start the third quarter that made it 27-19 for O'Fallon, a three ball for the Tigers sparked a 12-2 run, where Kloster scored five straight points, including a three-point play to give Edwardsville a 31-29 lead with 2:21 left in the third. Jaeden Rush and Brown hit back-to-back threes to put O'Fallon back up 35-31, which is where the score stood after three quarters.

Kloster then took over, scoring the first seven points of the fourth quarter to put the Tigers up 38-35, but back came the Panthers, taking the lead back on free throws from Jalen Smith and a Harris basket to go up 39-38 late. A Tillman free throw with 2:27 left tied the game 39-39 and in the final minute, the Tigers got the ball and held for the last shot. Tillman was sent to the line with 6.7 seconds left and calmly sank the free throws, the second after an O'Fallon time out, to put Edwardsville ahead 41-39, but Rush went

to the line with 0.2 seconds left in an effort to force overtime. Rush missed the first, then intentionally missed the second, but crossed the foul line before the ball hit the rim on the second to give the ball to the Tigers, who ran out the clock to preserve their win.

Kloster led Edwardsville with 13 points, while Crosby came up with nine points, Tillman had seven points, including his game-winning free throws, Malik Allen hit for six points, Iose Epenesa scored four points and Jake Curry had two points. Camper and Rush led the Panthers with eight points each, Brown scored seven points, Harris had six points, Smith and Dwayne Chatman, Jr. came up with four points each and Tre Gilliam had two points.

O'Fallon is now 17-6 on the year, while the Tigers go to 15-8 and also announced a change in their schedule. Edwardsville was originally set to play at Lutheran St. Charles in St. Charles, Mo. on Monday, but now will play a varsity-only game against East St. Louis SIUE Charter at Lucco-Jackson Gym Monday night at 6:15 p.m. The Tigers then host Belleville East next Friday at 7:30 p.m., then play at Waterloo Feb. 4 at 7 p.m.





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