

Semith Leads With 17 Points, Tigers Rally From 10 Points Down In Third Quarter To Take 54-48 Win Over Springfield For Young's First Win

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - A very resilient Edwardsville girls' basketball team got 17 points from sophomore Mia Semith as the Tigers rallied from 10 points down in the third quarter to outscore Springfield 25-14 in the period to take the lead en route to a 54-48 win over the Senators in the Tigers' home opener Monday night at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

It was the first win for new head coach Bryan Young, a longtime assistant coach on the boys' team before being appointed girls' head coach during the offseason. He was very happy to get the first win and credited his players and assistants for the outcome.

"It feels good," Young said, "but I'm really happy and more excited for the girls more than myself. I've been involved in some games, but as a head coach, it's fun to see. Sometimes, you get lost. The losses can help you forget about the work you're putting in. They've been putting in the work and I'm happy for them to see they got to see the fruits of their work tonight."

The Tigers played very tight and shutdown defense in protecting their lead, not allowing the Senators very many opportunities, and the defense helped the offense go on a big run that all but decided the game in the fourth quarter.

"We really hadn't spent a lot of time on our pressure," Young said. "I'm a big press guy, but we really hadn't had a lot of time to work on our pressure. That press we did tonight,

we probably worked on that the most, so we decided to go with it, and they were out there, just flying around, tipping balls, and being active. I thought that changed the game."





It was a very exciting game from start to finish, with the great comeback by the Tigers in the second half, and Young gave much credit to his players.

"Yeah, like I said, the buy-in was there," Young said. "I got on them a little bit at halftime about just being together and working for each other and it showed in the second half. It wasn't just one person, everyone was flying around, we saw them diving on the floor, getting kneed in the head, and things like that. You know you're playing hard when that happens. And that happened a few times, so I was just like very, very happy with the defensive effort in the second half."

One of the defensive leaders in the surge was junior guard Blakely Hockett, who, along with all of her teammates, made big plays during the second half that turned the game around in Edwardsville's favor.

"Blakely's a superior athlete," Young said, "and she showed that tonight. She just got out there and made things happen, ran the floor well and we saw her in transition, she got some easy baskets for us. I thought Sophie (Shapiro) finally got a little bit better feel of the game and I think being at home helped her a little bit. But overall, like I said, we had more balanced scoring and a more balanced effort tonight. It wasn't just two of them, I think all of them did in a little way. It's pretty good."

The game started out with both teams trading baskets for a 4-2 Edwardsville lead that lasted more of the first quarter, but the Senators got five straight points from Ariana Williams to go ahead 7-4. A pair of free throws from Hockett and a basket by Semith put the Tigers back on top 8-7, with Springfield coming back to take the lead after a buzzer-beater by Zakayah Lott made it 11-9 at quarter time.

The Senators extended their lead to 13-9 at the start of the second on a steal-and-score by Keziah Toran, with a Semith basket and a three from Lainey McFarlin giving the Tigers the lead at 14-13. After a 16-16 tie, Springfield, behind Mal Harris, Aniyah Rhinehouse, and Emma Scheffler, outscored Edwardsville 11-5 to take a 27-21 lead into the halftime interval.

At the start of the third quarter, Harris and Williams hit from close in to extend the Senator lead to 31-21, with a Semith three and a basket from McFarlin cutting the lead to 31-26, forcing a Springfield time out.

A Williams basket and free throws from Lott brought the Senator lead back to 35-26, with the Tigers then launching a 10-1 run that cut the lead to 37-36. After a Springfield basket, Semith hit a three to tie the game 39-39, with Ellie Neath scoring shortly before the buzzer to allow the Tigers to go up 41-40 after three quarters.

Edwardsville started out hot in the fourth, scoring the first nine points of the period, climaxed by a three from McFarlin to give Edwardsville a 50-40 lead. The Senators rallied with an 8-4 run near the end, but the Tigers were able to hold on and give Young his first head coaching win 54-48.

Semith led with 17 points, while McFarlin and Shapiro each had nine points. Neath came up with six points, Hockett had four points and Gabby Cook scored a single point.

The Senators drop to 1-3 on the young season, while the Tigers go to 1-2 and will meet up with Breese Mater Dei Catholic Wednesday afternoon in a special start time of 4:30 p.m. in the Thanksgiving Eve special.

Then Edwardsville continues its opening home stand with a visit from Reitz Memorial Academy of Evansville, Ind., on Saturday at noon and concludes the home stand with a game against Highland on Nov. 28 as a part of a boys-girls doubleheader, the tip-off coming at 6 p.m. For now, Young is very happy to have his first head coaching win.

"Like I said, I'm just excited for the girls," Young said. "I told them after the game, and I'm going to continue to tell them, getting those wins ain't easy, don't take them for granted. Enjoy this one, we've got work to do tomorrow."



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