

# Iose Epenesa Plays Key Defensive Role For Tigers, Is A Johnston Law Firm Male Athlete of Month

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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville High junior boys basketball player Iose Epenesa scored six points, and contributed to a great defensive effort that held the top three players on Collinsville to a combined 31 points as the Tigers dealt the Kahoks their first loss of the season 42-38 on Jan. 5 at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

Edwardsville broke a three-game losing skid with the win and also broke Collinsville's 17-game winning streak to start the season, with the Kahoks tied for number two in the state with Homewood-Flossmoor in this week's Illinois Associated Press Class 4A poll, behind top-ranked Chicago Curie.

For the season, Epenesa's made a significant contribution to the team, averaging 6.5 points and 6.9 rebounds per game, adding on 18 assists, four steals and two blocked shots as the Tigers improved to 11-6 with the win. Epenesa is a Johnston Law Firm Male Athlete of the Month for the Tigers.

"I'm feeling really excited, and I don't even know what to say," Epenesa said in his postgame interview that followed the game. "But we worked hard for this all week."

That the Tigers did, and it's a big feather in the Edwardsville caps, and also could be a factor when the seedings are determined for the IHSA regionals, which begins next month.

"It's a big one for our mentality," Epenesa said. "Going into everything, it's big for us."

Going into the game against the Kahoks, the plan was simple and straightforward.

"You know, we've been working hard all week," Epenesa said, "and defense and rebounding was our biggest plan for this game. That's what we did, and we did it."

And as mentioned, Edwardsville was able to hold the Kahoks' three most important players to the combined 31 points in an impressive defensive display.

"We just got ready for this game, knowing it was going to be a hard one, because they're number two in the state," Epenesa said.

Going forward, Epenesa thinks it'll be a big boost for the team, but at the end of the season, it's going to look like just another win for Edwardsville.

"It's good for us," Epenesa said, "it's going to mean a lot. But, at the end, it's just gonna be another win, and we've got to move fast and go win some more games."

There's still plenty of season left and the win over Collinsville will definitely serve as a big boost for the Tigers.

"Yes, it was a big confidence booster for us," Epenesa said, "and hopefully, we'll keep working next week."

Again, congrats to Epenesa for his recognition as a Johnston Law Firm Male Athlete of the Month for the Tigers.

