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Friday, Jan. 06, 2012 0 comments

Tigers roll past O'Fallon

BY DEAN CRIDDLE - News-Democrat

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EDWARDSVILLE -- If the Edwardsville Tigers wanted to make a statement they did this week at Edwardsville High School.

Taking on another of the powers of the Southwestern Conference for the second time in three nights, the Tigers dominated from the outset Thursday and rolled to a 71-28 win over O'Fallon.

Fresh off a 59-31 win over East St. Louis on Tuesday, the Tigers scored the first nine points of the game and built a 20-6 lead after one quarter.

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It got even worse for the Panthers (7-4, 4-2 SWC) in the second as the Tigers (16-0) got a combined 12 points from Aaliyah Covington and Kortney Dunbar to increase their advantage to 43-20 at halftime.

A total of seven players scored for Edwardsville, which rolled to its 39th straight SWC victory.

"We've played two very good games this week against two awfully good opponents. I'm very pleased, especially with our defensive effort," Tigers coach Lori Blade said. "I'm afraid to say it because I don't want to jinx it, but they're getting better,

especially on that part (defense) of it.

"We were focused and really did some good things out there, because O'Fallon has five kids who can really shoot the basketball."

O'Fallon, which was impressive in winning three of four games last week at the Mascoutah Tournament, was never in the game after the first five minutes.

The Panthers missed their first six shots and committed three turnovers, while Edwardsville got an early 3-point basket from Sarah Parker to key its early charge.

O'Fallon coach Ryan Massey was impressed by what he saw from the Tigers.

"Edwardsville gets better every year we play them. They breed them here and come up through the program. Coach Blade does a tremendous job," Massey said. "There really isn't much to say, except that they came out early and we had no answers.

"I've said it all along that Edwardsville is the top team in this conference, until somebody beats them."

Kortney Dunbar drained two of the Tigers' five first-half 3-pointers as the Tigers continued to expand their lead.

O'Fallon, with its lone first quarter highlight being a Taylor Klingelhoef 3, trailed 20-6 after one period.

It would only get worse in the second quarter for O'Fallon as junior all-stater Emmonnie Henderson hit three medium-range jumpers, Covington scored eight points and Dunbar, showing she's more than a 3-point threat, knifed inside for a pair of layups.

When 6-3 senior Leigh Kesper nailed a 3-pointer at the buzzer, the Edwardsville lead was 23 at intermission.

"People concentrate on defending us in the paint. That's no secret," Blade said. "If we can step out and continue to hit 3s it's going to open things up even more for us inside.

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Henderson had 16 to lead Edwardsville, while Katlin Kendall had nine for O'Fallon.

Contact reporter Dean Criddle at 239-2661.

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