

# LANCER BASKETBALL

## Belleville East Student Newspaper

By: Steven Stock



If a student were told the Lancers would have a 24-4 record with three games left in the season, would he or she be surprised? I think many students would fully expect our boys' team to lose sometimes with how hard their schedule is this season. The Lancers' four losses have come to Decatur MacArthur (at the Collinsville Tournament), O'Fallon, East St. Louis, and Edwardsville, all on the road. Outside of that, the Lancers have played dominant basketball including five shootout wins and a Chick Fil A Classic Championship. Even playing their sloppy and rough basketball, the Lancers have been

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able to grind out some tough victories. Their tough schedule is what they wanted all along in order to be ready for the postseason.

The Lancers came into the holiday break with a record of 13-0 until the semifinals of the Collinsville Prairie Farms Tournament. The Lancers were matched with an undefeated Decatur MacArthur who was coming off winning this same tournament last year. The Lancers left it all out on the court but unfortunately lost in overtime, 71-65. The Lancers made big mistakes by giving up a 12-point lead with less than 5 minutes left and a turnover with less than 35 seconds left in regulation. This would be a loss to learn from.

A week later, the Lancers had to face another tough foe, the 11-4 O'Fallon Panthers. The Lancers struggled in this game, shooting 30% from the field including 32% from 3. Singleton and Wilson combined for 2-19 shooting, a rare sight this season. After this game, the team responded well from the loss by defeating Belleville West 66-57 and defeating one of the best teams in the state of Illinois, Country Club Hills Hillcrest 65-59.

Then came East St. Louis at Lindenwood-Belleville. East trailed by 19 at one point in the second quarter in a hostile environment. It took Jordan Pickett to put East back into it by dropping 32 in the game and leading a 27-13 fourth quarter in favor of East. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough as the Flyers held on to win 72-71. East went on to win four straight and it put them in the Championship game of the Chick-Fil-A Classic against crosstown rival, Belleville West.

Out of all the games I have been able to experience, it's tough to pick one that outmatched this one. East vs. West on a Saturday night with championship aspirations on

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the line does not get any better. It lived up to the hype and then some. After both teams started slow, it went down to the wire. It was time for Tournament MVP Jordan Pickett to take over. The Lancers had numerous free-throw opportunities but had a stretch of going 1-6 at the line that put West back in the game. With East up by 2, the Maroons fouled Pickett. With the crowd getting as loud as they could, Pickett didn't let them get to him. He made both free throws to seal it, 57-52. "I knew he was going to make them. No doubt in my mind" is what head coach Jeff Creek said after the game. Pickett and Antwine Wilson combined for 48 points to claim the championship. Since then, the Lancers have gone 4-1 with the lone loss on the road to a hot Edwardsville team, 33-32.

The Lancers have three games left with two being at home, O'Fallon, at West, and East St. Louis. East is coming into these last three with a battle for the Southwestern Conference Title sitting a half-game back of O'Fallon and being tied for 2nd with Edwardsville, East St. Louis at 6-3 with Collinsville right behind them at 6-4. These last three, East will hope to find offensive rhythm, and as Assistant Coach Keith Padgett said it best before the game vs Edwardsville, "Play our brand of basketball". East will also need to find a way to play better on the road as all four losses have come at neutral sites or road games. They'll have a chance to do this at Belleville West on the 14th. The Lancers will look to avenge their Regional Championship loss to Collinsville in OT last year with the hope of winning it in two weeks.