

Lincoln goes down in first round to host Pulaski 62-49

By Derek Brightwell
Contributing Writer

A year after winning the region on their home court, Lincoln County couldn't get over the hump against Pulaski County in the first round of 12th region play on its home floor.

"I thought they played harder than we did — it's evident. They got to the basket," Lincoln coach Jeff Jackson said after the 62-49 loss. "They had 10 offensive rebounds and we had one. We didn't do a good job of blocking out and got a little quick offensively. We wanted to push the ball but we wanted to make good decisions and execute when we could run."

In the first half, the Patriots kept it close and went on a run late to cut the lead to 22-17 going into the locker room. But the Maroons came out hot to start the third and opened the half on an 8-0 run that ended up being a 13-3 run.

"I just told them to keep fighting, scratching, clawing. We had a lot of time left," Jackson said. "We cut it to six on two different occasions in the fourth but couldn't get over the hump beyond that."

Those two comeback runs that Lincoln made to cut the lead to six were both thwarted by offensive rebounds and kick outs.

"They played volleyball with it until they made it. They attacked the rim and were a little bit more prepared," Jackson said. "Just couldn't get over the hump. We had the opportunity and the ball gets loose, they end up with it and it goes from six to nine in a hurry."

Sophomore guard Zach Travis

was the main roadblock that Lincoln couldn't get by. During the Maroons'



third

quarter assault, Travis had 12 of his 21 points, and he hit the three that made it "six to nine in a hurry."

Perhaps the most impressive thing

rebounds and scored on a bunch of those.



You can't give up second or third shot opportunities to a team that good."

One bright spot in an otherwise disappointing end to the season was the play of freshman Tremane Alcorn.

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"We tried to squeeze the paint but we didn't do a very good job of staying in front of him," Jackson said. Riley's there to help but if we do our job defensively and move our feet to stay in front of him, he doesn't get that deep. He attacks the rim hard — they all do. They had 10 offensive

He had 11 points to lead the team in scoring, and never felt as if the moment was too big for him.

"He's got an opportunity to be a very special player," Jackson said. "He likes to play and he works very hard at it. He just loves the game and if he keeps doing the things that he's doing, he'll have a chance to have a tremendous career."

Players like Alcorn and sophomore point guard Jaxon Smith make Jackson excited for next year, despite the

departure of four seniors.

"We've got bits and pieces coming back. We're going to have to go back to work and we will the Monday after the state tournament. We'll regroup," he said. "Things are open — there's going to be a lot of opportunities for a lot of kids to battle and work and get playing time. We're excited about next year already. We talked about that in here tonight as well. Opportunities for every kid to step up in the gym and work and try to get minutes. That's what makes it so competitive."

But still, Wednesday's loss does mean the end of Riley Bodner, Elijah Frye, Bryston Alcorn and Preston Durham's time as Lincoln County basketball players.

"They represent everything you want for our school and our basketball team. They do it in a first-class manner and they're well respected," Jackson said. "Elijah is a tremendous kid and he works hard every day. Bryston is a tremendous kid. He's just a great personality. Riley's a great kid. He's so funny and smart. Preston Durham may be our most competitive kid in practice every day. He's a great teammate and a great leader. I've told people this before — if you want to have a Mr. Patriot where it really means something to put that jersey on, it would be Preston."

"Those four kids are very close. They like each other and respect each other. I'm very fortunate and very blessed to be able to coach them and be around them. I've learned a lot from them. I love them dearly and we'll miss them greatly and all four will be successful in the next phase of their lives. I'm very confident in that."



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