

# Dunn's outback pushes Ads over Somerset in semi-finals

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Danville had led the entire game — from the first possession when Dante Hayden hit a three all the way up until a minute left in the game when Somerset tied it at 64.

In the timeout, coach Ed McKinney told senior Trey Dawson to come off the screen and look for his shot, but he told sophomore Jalen Dunn to be ready.

“Coach McKinney told me in the timeout to watch the boards and he’s a tremendous coach,” Dunn said. “You’ve got to listen to him.”

And when Dawson’s shot hit off the left side of the iron, Dunn was ready and elevated to get the put back as the buzzer went off to give Danville a 66-64 win and a ticket to the regional finals.

“Jalen, it’s uncanny really for his size. He hangs in the air and he finishes and for a kid his size — you don’t see it,” McKinney said. “He’s got a little something special, and it’s kind of hard to put your finger on what it is — but when kids can do it, they can do it. He hangs in the air for a long time and holds the ball and guys are coming down and he’s still up there finishing.”

As the Danville fans stormed the court and mobbed the sophomore who just hit the biggest shot in his life, Dawson heaved the ball in the air and did a backflip on center court. It was a cathartic feeling for a team who had twice failed to knock off their All-A rivals.

For the first half of the game, it was all Admirals.

Hayden came out with one thing on his mind — shooting the lights out. And he did, scoring all 11 of his points in the first quarter, knocking down three triples and a pair of free throws. But foul trouble kept him off the court for large chunks of the remainder of the game.

There were mental miscues — Trey Dawson hit a corner three and let the Somerset bench know about it to earn a technical foul, and Ed McKinney picked up a tech of his own as he leapt in protest of a no-call.

But still, Danville led 21-8 after one and 39-22 at the half.

Then Somerset made some adjustments and started their comeback.

A retooled press sped up the Admirals offense and forced them into either bad sets or turnovers. McKinney takes the blame for most of that.

“We turned the ball over some there. Some of that’s just I should’ve had us a little better prepared for that half court 2-2-1 thing,” he said. “That probably wasn’t very good, we weren’t really ready for that.”

“We just had to adjust. They play a good zone and they’re a good team,” Dawson added. “They’re quick, athletic and they get hands on the ball. They came back, but we were able to fight them off and get the win.”

On the other side of the floor, the Briar Jumpers shot came alive.

They had only managed to hit one three pointer in the entire first half. In the second half, they knocked down seven. And it came from everywhere.

Gavin Stephens hit three of them, all feeling like daggers. Dylan Burton hit a big one in the fourth quarter and Jase Bruner hit three of his own.

“My nerves were off the chart,” Dunn said about the comeback.

“Then they got hot and we knew they would,” McKinney said.

“That’s why they’re picked one or two in the region. But we gutted it out, found a way to do it.”

Part of the way they did it, Dunn said, was working as a more cohesive unit.

“We wasn’t really using teamwork the first ones — we were trying to do it individually,” he said, referencing the double OT loss in the All-A regional and the blowout loss later in the year. “Tonight we worked together and got things done.”

Up next for Danville is West Jessamine — a team that has looked unstoppable in its two games this tournament. In the first round, the Colts had their way with Southwestern — beating them by almost 30 points. In the semifinals, against host Pulaski County, they held

off a second half surge and pulled away for an 82-68 victory.

“We watched them first game and I told coach (Jeron) Dunbar of Somerset, whoever wins this one good luck,” McKinney said. “They look physical. Shoot it in. Big kid in the middle (Clayton Winter) is really a load and then (DeAjuan) Stepp gives them a whole other level. If they shoot it like they did tonight, we’re in trouble.

“I’d rather have a shot than not,” he added.

It’s a team they’ve seen before — in the fourth game of the year, West scored a 67-49 win over the Ads. Dawson knows the game plan for how to avoid that is simple.

“Play better than we did last time.”



The Harrodsburg Herald/Derek Brightwell  
**Jalen Dunn hugs his teammates after hitting the game-winning put back Monday night to send the Admirals into the finals of the 12th region championship.**