



JUNIOR GERARDO ALANIS (2) in the Regional Championship game played with Tuscola on Fri., Feb. 24. The Purple Riders lost 63-46 in the game played at Tuscola. Photo by Nancy Rairden.



JUNIOR RYAN LINDSTROM (00) in the Regional Championship game played with Tuscola on Fri., Feb. 24. The Purple Riders lost 63-46 in the game played at Tuscola. Photo by Nancy Rairden.



SOPHOMORE BRADEN PHILLIPS (10) in the Regional Championship game played with Tuscola on Fri., Feb. 24. The Purple Riders lost 63-46 in the game played at Tuscola. Photo by Nancy Rairden.

Arcola boys season ends in regional championship

Gerardo Alanis scores 22 in 48-41 semifinal victory

By Mike Monahan
TUSCOLA - It was deja vu all over again as the Arcola boys' basketball team played the same teams in the Class 1A regional as the 2021-22 season. This year the Purple Riders

beat Okaw Valley 48-41 behind 22 points by Gerardo Alanis to reach the championship game. Arcola lost to Tuscola 63-46 as the Warriors copped 10-of-19 (.526) from three-point range. Last season Arcola lost in

the championship game 66-43 at Arcola after being the Timberwolves 65-57. The Purple Riders finished 17-14, while Tuscola, 27-6, moved on to play Effingham St. Anthony at Altamont in the sectional semifinals Wednesday. Okaw Valley finished 17-13.

"This is my 18th year of coaching and the hardest year I have ever had as a coach for me personally and also probably the most rewarding year for myself as a coach just to see the growth we had with those five guys (Ryan Lindstrom, Tyson Lewis, Gerardo Alanis, Braden Phillips and Jackson Miller). that played pretty much the entire game (vs. Tuscola and most games)," said Arcola coach Greg Gisinger. "They are the epitome of what I envisioned Arcola basketball means when I came here five years ago; toughness, grit, no quit, play together, play with passion and energy. And for the young guys if they don't buy into it and follow their lead they either have to change or get out of the program. We are really proud of those guys and hopefully they spark us into next year. We are hoping for a little help next year and hopefully not be a six seed in the sub-sectional, but a one or two seed."

It was Arcola's best season since going 24-4 in 2015-16 and the fourth straight winning season, one that has not

happened since 2008-09 through 2011-12.

Tuscola 63, Arcola 46

Tuscola came out and applied pressure on Arcola and was on fire from the field. The Warriors led just 9-5 when they went on a 14-1 run over a span of 3:08 for a 23-6 lead.

Arcola didn't get closer than 13 the rest of the game.

"I was afraid they would be able to do that," said Gisinger. "We have a young group who has never been in this type of game. It was a good move by him (Tuscola coach Justin Bozarth), throwing the pressure at us early and catching us on our heels a little bit."

Tuscola was 10-of-12 .833 from the field in the first 8:31 of the game as they led 26-10 after a three-point play by Kam Sweetnam.

Sweetnam opened the scoring with a 3-pointer, a bucket by Chris Boyd, another basket by Sweetnam, who finished with a game-high 22 points and that was followed by a basket by Jordan Quinn and a basket by Josiah Hortin as four different players scored for an 11-5 lead. A putback by Quinn, and eight straight points by Sweetnam made it 23-8 after the opening quarter. The Warriors made 3-of-4 from three-point range.

"We try and put an emphasis on fast starts because it kind of gets us going emotionally when we can jump out right out of the gate," said Bozarth. "We seem to guard a little better when things are going better on the offensive end. We try and put an emphasis on putting pressure on and kind of mixing and matching what we do from there."

Tuscola played a 1-2-2 press that falls back into a 1-2-2 with the one a lot closer to the two wing defenders and at times it was actually a 3-2. The Warriors also played some man-to-man, while Arcola played man-to-man.

The Purple Riders did get Tuscola into some foul trouble as Sweetnam and Boyd had two fouls in the first 5:15 of the game.

"After the first kind of initial pressure I thought we did a good job of attacking it (press and zone) and they got in foul trouble a little bit," said Gisinger. "We stopped playing on our heels. I thought we

adjusted well. That was a good move by him coming at us early and playing on our nerves a little bit. The start was my biggest fear coming into tonight and it ended up being true."

Arcola trailed 33-10 when they scored six straight points and nine of the last 12 in the second quarter to make it a 17-point deficit. Miller, Lewis and Alanis had baskets and Miller ended the scoring in the half with a 3-pointer.

Tuscola came out in the second half the same as the first as they outscored Arcola 9-2 after the Purple Riders opened the scoring with a basket by Phillips.

It was Tuscola's third regional title in five seasons, with one of those being the COVID year (2020-21 when there was no postseason).

Both teams had points by starters only and the Warriors had four of theirs in double digits. Quinn had 15, Hortin 14 and James 10.

"We shot it (3-pointers) pretty well and anytime you can shoot the ball in high school 50 percent from the 3-point line you feel pretty confident with how you are playing. We put a huge emphasis on shooting the basketball and we practice it every single day and we have got a lot of guys that can shoot it with confidence. It is part of what makes us pretty good. If there are one or two guys that are off, we still have got 2-3 that we feel pretty good about when the ball leaves their hand."

Phillips and Miller led Arcola with 18 and 13 points

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JUNIOR TYSON LEWIS (5) in the Regional Championship game played with Tuscola on Fri., Feb. 24. The Purple Riders lost 63-46 in the game played at Tuscola. Photo by Nancy Rairden.



JUNIOR JACKSON MILLER (14) in the Regional Championship game played with Tuscola on Fri., Feb. 24. The Purple Riders lost 63-46 in the game played at Tuscola. Photo by Nancy Rairden.



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