

# Community Sports



## Title Town: Tuscola wins annual event

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's boys and girls basketball teams went a combined 8-0 this past week at the Monticello Holiday Hoopla, becoming the first school to win both sides of the annual event in 15 years. Both Warrior programs have collected a pair of titles each in the past three seasons. Coach Tim Kohlbecker's girl's going back to back with wins in 2021 and now 2022 while coach Justin Bozarth's boys secured their second crown, advancing to the finals each of the last three tournaments, winning it in 2019 and now 2022.

All Tourney selections Ella Boyer and Isabelle Wilcox led the 18-0 Warriors to a 55-44 come-from-behind victory over a very good Clinton team. Likewise, All-Tourney picks Jordan Quinn and Josiah Hortin joined with their buddies avenging their year's loss to the host Sages in the Championship game with a 42-32 victory to hoist the traveling trophy.

Clinton used a pair of 5-point runs to take an early lead and held it onto it till the first buzzer heading to the 2nd on top 13-6 against the unbeaten ladies in the black and gold. Wilcox sandwiched a three in between two trips to the line fueling a Warrior run in the 2nd, helping cut into the lead and Boyer drained a three of her own late in the stanza, pulling Tuscola to within four heading to the breakdown 26-22.

Boyer quick 3 in the third

and then Moss went to work down low. The post scored 13 of her game-high 17 points in the final 12 minutes of action. She also swiped a pair of balls in the paint and grabbed 2-rebounds. The Warriors gave up just one field goal in the last 4-minutes moving in front for good at the under-3 mark on the clock. Lia Patterson came up big late as well with 4 of her 8-points in the final period, including a pair of clutch free throws in the waning seconds.

"We struggled early offensively as we relied too much on 3's without the ball touching the paint first," Kohlbecker said. "We talked at half about our poor rebounding effort and made offensive and defensive adjustments. As the game progressed, the ball started touching the paint off the bounce and pass, and scoring got easier. We felt we could full-court pressure them and I feel the constant pressure wore them down."

Tuscola moves to 18-0 on the year and 3-0 in the CIC with the title. Moss added a double-double to the mix, grabbing 10 rebounds. Boyer was just two points behind her, scoring in every quarter on her way to 15 points. Wilcox reached double-digits also accounting for 10 points. Woodard and Ava Boyer combined for 8 rebounds, 6 points, 4 assists, and 3 steals.

"This was a total team effort, the defensive job by Izzy and Lia on their star, Ella play-

ing 32-minutes and scoring and guarding, Ava and her everyday hard-nosed effort, Syd's double-double after sitting most of the first half with fouls, Zoey giving us productive guard minutes on both ends, Harley coming to life in 2nd half and Molly (Macaulay) providing interior defense," stated the coach. "What's exciting is we have so much room for improvement, we can't be content! I am so proud of this team and how they play hard and find ways to win."

It was a different story on the boy's side as the Warriors never trailed from tip to final buzzer. Chris Boyd broke the ice with a putback a minute into the game and Kam Sweetnum and Jordan Quinn followed with three balls putting the Warriors on top of the Sages 8-0 less than 4-minutes into the game. Tuscola held the Sages to just 4 points in the opening stanza, entering the 2nd on top by eight 12-4.

"The championship game was a great environment and a really good night for Tuscola Basketball," Bozarth commented. "It was a joy to see our guys get emotionally invested into the girls championship game. The girls' passion and energy really set the tone for us coming out of the locker room."

Parker James as he did all tourney long, gave an offensive boost off the bench with 4-points in 2nd and Sweetnum answered a Sage three with one of his own, increasing the War-

rior lead to double-digits heading into the break in front 23-13. Boyd started the 3rd like he did at the start putting one back and Tuscola never looked back holing the Sages scoreless for the first 9-minutes of the 2nd half while keeping a safe cushion the rest of the way.

Quinn led all with 15 points on 7 of 13 from the field. Sweetnum was next up with 10 points, including a pair of threes. Boyd added 6 points to the mix and Musgrave 4, all coming in the final period. Hortin ran the offense dishing out a game-high 5 assists while trading time with Musgrave guarding the Sages' top scorer.

"Monticello is difficult to guard. They're so well-coached and put a huge emphasis in staying committed to their offensive movement until you make a mistake defensively. We gave up no points in the 3rd quarter and rebounded well all night. We are trending in the right direction with our improvements this season. Josiah and Jordan Quinn continued their stellar weeks. Josiah controlled the pace of all of our games and took on the challenge of guarding Monticello's best player for 4 quarters. Jordan dominated the majority of our games with his athleticism and physicality. It was so fun to see him lead us with his energy and excitement on championship night."

## Statement made by Hoopla opener

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's girl's basketball team made the biggest splash in pool play at the Monticello Holiday Hoopla in their opener. Coach Tim Kohlbecker's crew collected win number fifteen on the year upending the state's third-ranked team in class 1A downing Neoga in a thriller 49-43. They backed that up one day later with a pair of wins, dropping GCMS 55-24 in the first game on Tuesday, Dec. 27 and PBL 47-22 in the nightcap ending pool play 3-0 earning the right to defend their Hoopla title, from a year ago against a good Clinton squad.

Kohlbecker's entire roster saw time in the second half of the final two skirmishes keeping the lineup fresh for a championship run. Ella Boyer led all in Tuscola's pool, adding 56 points to her season stat sheet. The senior sharpshooter hit the double-digit plateau in all three

contests while tallying double-digit made threes.

Next up was classmate Harley Woodard donating 27 points to the cause. A third senior Isabelle Wilcox followed with 26 points, including 4-three's, then came Sydney Moss with 21 points. Ava Boyer hit a pair of threes on her, accounting for 17 points in the trio of outings.

"Pool play went as expected, with our first game being our toughest and using the subsequent games to work on certain areas and to get playing time for everyone," stated the coach. "Which is critical for continued success. We lost twice to Neoga last year, we watched them live a week and a half ago, watched other videos and we knew they were worthy of their #3 ranking. We had a game plan and the girls executed very well. We made shots, FT's, won the rebounding battle and made their best player work hard for her points."

Both Tuscola and Neoga entered the marquee game with identical 14-0 records and it showed as the two state-ranked squads traded leads five times throughout the first frame. Ella Boyer hit 3 of her 4-three's in the game in the first 8 minutes of action en route to 13 points. Woodard and Lia Patterson both stepped outside the arc as well in the opening stanza, opening up the middle for Moss in the 2nd frame. The junior post took full advantage, hitting a trio of jumpers, helping give the Warriors a 21-15 lead heading into the break.

Neoga stormed back with an 8-point run in the 3rd, putting the Indians on top by two 33-31 entering the 4th quarter. Woodard scored 6 of Tuscola's first 10 of the 2nd half and hit 6 of 6 from the line late, solidifying the victory. Ava Boyer was strong late as well, scoring all 5 of her points in the final 6 minutes of

the game. Boyer hit a late three and Wilcox added another.

Coach K's group got off the bus on fire on day two, scoring 18 in the first quarter against GCMS and 19 in the same time span versus PBL. The defense, as always, was stellar, leading to a pair of dominant wins. Ella Boyer had a game-high 21 points against Gibson City and 12 against PBL, sinking 7-treys. Wilcox was big in the late game, accounting for 15 points against the Panthers, hitting 3 of 6 from downtown. Ava Boyer notched 12 points, 11 deals, 6 assists and 5 rebounds.

Woodard was a beast on the boards, grabbing 15 while scoring 16 points, including an 8-point third against Paxton. Patterson and Zoey Thomason added to the stat columns combining for 9 rebounds, 7 steals, and 9 points.

## Survive and advance in Holiday Hoopla

By Lenny Sementi

As it turns out, Tuscola's closest ball game at the Monticello Holiday Hoopla was their first one. And, once the mark is in the win column no one really cares how it got there and in pool play, that mark is all that matters. Coach Justin Bozarth's boys moved past a hustling Neoga squad in their opener the day after Christmas with a late scoring burst, downing the Indians in a back-and-forth low-scoring affair 43-39.

Points were at a premium early, with a pair of Indian's threes proving to be the difference at the first buzzer, giving Neoga a slim 13-9 advantage after one. Tuscola was unable to reach double-digits again in the second, scoring 9 on two buckets by Jordan Quinn and one each from Kam Sweetnum and Josiah Hortin. The Warriors' defense allowed just two field goals in the same time span, knotting the game at 17's entering the break.

Bozarth's boys found double-digits scoring 13 in both of the final two frames and slammed the door on the defensive end to secure the round one victory. Hortin led the Warriors with 12 points hitting threes in each of the final two stanzas. Sweetnum hit a three late, ending his day with 11 points and Quinn followed with 10 points. He and Hortin each hauled in 6 rebounds, pushing Tuscola to

an 8-board advantage. Parker James added 7 points to the mix off the bench on 3 of 6 from the floor.

"We started our first two pool play games a little sluggish. It wasn't just us there wasn't a ton of real pure basketball played on Monday," stated Bozarth. "It looked like most of us hadn't practiced in 3-4 days because of the weather and the Holiday. We struggled defensively out of the gate against both Neoga and GCMS. Starting games well has been a focus of ours this season and we did not meet our expectations in both of those games. However, both games were close throughout, which is what we needed. The majority of our wins have not been close in the 4th quarter so it was nice for us to learn the importance of executing at the end of close games."

"Sawyer Woodard provided great minutes in both of those games off the bench. We are seeing him dominate JV games this year and you can see him finding his footing in varsity games as well."

Points came easier in game one of day two but it was the same recipe that sealed the deal on win number two of the Hoopla with the defense holding a good GCMS team to just 7 points in the last 8 minutes of action, securing a 52-46 victory. Quinn scored 4 in the 1st and 8 in the 4th, leading all with 12

points. The junior banged his way to 10 rebounds, 4 in the 4th, adding a double-double to his season wrap sheet. Hortin and Chris Boyd both checked in with 8 points apiece, while Colton Musgrave and Sweetnum each added 7 points to the stat sheet. James was again big off the bench, tallying 6 points and grabbing 5 rebounds.

The Warriors fired on all cylinders in the nightcap of day two and their final pool play skirmish ran past PBL 49-12 limiting the Panthers to just 5 baskets the entire game. Quinn and Jackson Barrett both hit three's in the first stanza helping the black and gold to 14 points which was two more than they would need to punch their ticket to the program's third straight championship game at the Hoopla.

Quinn was good on 7 of 13 from the floor and 2 of 3 from the line in the game posting a game-high 16 points. Sweetnum was good on 3 of 4 from outside the arc en route to 11 points, while Hortin, Boyd, James and Woodard each donated 4-points to the cause helping Tuscola to a 3-0 outing in pool play.

"We made PBL very uncomfortable holding them scoreless for about the first 13 minutes of that game," commented the coach. "Chris' improvements on that end have been a key component to our success. He's not allowing opposing big man

to score and his rotations off the ball continue to get better. Parker and Kam have both made drastic improvements defensively as well now that they're getting comfortable with varsity basketball. As a result, you're seeing us hold teams to a low amount of points."

TUSCOLA (43)									
	fg-fga	ft-fa	3-3a	reb	a	s	pf	tp	
Quinn	4-10	2-2	0-3	6	2	1	0	10	
Musgrave	0-2	0-0	0-1	5	3	2	2	0	
Boyd	0-3	0-0	0-0	2	0	0	3	0	
Hortin	5-10	0-0	2-6	6	1	2	2	12	
Sweetnam	5-13	0-0	1-7	1	1	4	1	11	
James	3-6	1-2	0-2	2	0	1	2	7	
Woodard	0-1	3-4	0-0	2	0	0	0	3	
Totals	17-45	6-8	3-19	24	7	10	10	43	
FG% 38% FT% -75% 3-FG%16% Turnovers-8									

NEOGA (39)									
FG-16-37 (43%) FT-2-3 (67%) 3FG-5-16 (31%)									
Reb 16; TO-13.									
Neoga		12	5	13	9			-	39
Tuscola		8	9	13	13			-	43

TUSCOLA (52)									
	fg-fga	ft-fa	3-3a	reb	a	s	pf	tp	
Quinn	4-12	4-5	0-3	10	2	0	0	12	
Musgrave	3-5	1-4	1-1	4	2	4	4	8	
Boyd	4-5	0-0	0-0	1	1	0	3	8	
Hortin	3-7	0-1	2-4	3	3	2	0	8	
Sweetnam	3-7	0-0	1-4	2	0	1	0	7	
Barrett	0-1	1-3	0-1	0	0	0	1	1	
James	3-6	0-0	0-0	4	2	0	0	6	
Woodard	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	2	
Totals	21-44	6-13	4-13						
FG% 88% FT% -46% 3-FG%31% Turnovers10									

GIBSON CITY (46)									
FG-18-36 (50%) FT 6-12 (50%) 3FG-4-11 (36%)									
Reb 15; TO-14.									
Gibson City		16	10	13	7			-	46
Tuscola		13	14	11	14			-	43

TUSCOLA (49)									
	fg-fga	ft-fa	3-3a	reb	a	s	pf	tp	
Quinn	7-14	2-3	0-1	2	4	2	1	16	
Musgrave	1-2	0-0	1-1	5	2	3	2	3	
Boyd	2-3	0-0	0-0	4	0	1	0	4	
Hortin	2-2	0-0	0-0	4	6	3	2	4	
Sweetnam	4-6	0-0	3-5	0	1	2	0	11	
Barrett	1-5	0-0	1-5	1	1	1	1	3	
James	2-6	0-0	0-2	6	2	2	0	4	
Woodard	2-3	0-0	0-0	3	0	0	2	4	
Broady	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	1	0	
Totals	21-41	2-3	5-14	35	16	14	9	49	
FG%-51% FT%-67% 3-FG%-36% Turnovers10									

PAXTON/BUCKLEY/ LODA (12)									
FG-5-31 (16%) FT 0-0 (0%) 3FG-2-18 (11%)									
Reb 12; TO-18.									
PBL		0	4	5	3			-	12
Tuscola		14	10	15	10			-	49

TUSCOLA (42)									
	fg-fga	ft-fa	3-3a	reb	a	s	pf	tp	
Quinn	7-13	0-0	1-2	5	1	1	1	15	
Musgrave	1-1	2-2	0-0	3	0	2	2	4	
Boyd	3-4	0-0	0-0	4	0	0	2	6	
Hortin	1-6	0-0	0-3	5	5	0	1	2	
Sweetnam	4-8	0-0	2-5	2	0	1	3	10	
Barrett	1-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	2	
James	1-1	1-2	0-0	2	2	1	1	3	
Totals	18-35	3-6	3-10	21	8	5	10	42	
FG%-51% FT%-50% 3-FG%-30% Turnovers 11									

MONTICELLO (32)									
FG-12-37 (32%) FT 3-6 (50%) 3FG-5-17 (29%)									
Reb 18; TO-13.									
Monticello		4	9	0	19			-	32
Tuscola		12	11	6	13			-	42

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