

Community Sports



VILLA GROVE JUNIOR HIGH DEVILETTES are taking two routines to state. They placed second place in Pom Pom and Hip Hop at Mattoon Jan. 29. Villa Grove Devilettes received first place in Hip Hop and are also re-qualifying for state. *Submitted Photos.*

Step one for Bozarth's boys

By Lenny Sementi

Basketball coach Justin Bozarth's bunch kicked off the 2023 version of the Central Illinois Conference in style. The 2nd-seeded Warriors blew open a tight game in the opening round with a big third frame to upend the 7th-seeded Redskins of Sullivan 58-27, earning a spot in the semifinals and a date with 3rd-seeded Decatur St Teresa.

Points were at a premium for both squads in the early going but a 4-for-4 effort at the free throw line by Josiah Hortin pushed the Warriors in front by a pair late, heading to the second frame on top 8-6. The junior was good on all 6 attempts from the charity stripe, donating 10 points to the cause. It was the complete opposite in the second, with the teams trading hoops throughout, combining for 31 points and 5 three-pointers.

"The first half of both games this week were very similar as it relates to our defense," Bozarth said. "We were not really sharp defensively to start either game. Both teams beat us to loose balls and kept the games tight in each half. It's a point of emphasis moving forward for us that we have to start each game with a better mentality."

Jordan Quinn and Kam Sweetnam each stepped outside the arc for a three helping the Warriors stay in front entering the break on top 25-20. Quinn scored 7 of his game-

high 16 points in the period. The third-year varsity player did a little bit of everything delivering 8 rebounds, 5-steals, and 4 assists in the victory.

Sweetnam drained another trey in the big third on his way to 9 points as the Warriors utilized an inside-out attack after the break to fuel a 10-point run and pull away from the Redskins. Colton Musgrave and Chris Boyd worked the inside-out game. Musgrave hit a three-ball and a deep jumper, scoring 7 points in the contest. Boyd did his damage down low with 3-buckets in the pivotal stanza en route to a perfect 5 for 5 outing from the field, adding 10 points to his season stat sheet.

Tuscola slammed the door on the win on the defensive end, limiting Sullivan to just 3-field goals in the second half and a mere 7 points. Quinn hit his second three of the game early in the fourth and sophomore Sawyer Woodard put one back and hit a runner scoring all 4 of his points in the final 8 minutes of action while also grabbing 5 rebounds in Tuscola's twentieth win of the season.

"Fortunately, we played really well in the second half," commented the coach. "Josiah put together two really good games this week in both scoring and distributing the basketball. He makes us so much better when he's putting pressure on the defense by attacking the basket off the dribble."

Warriors winning streak continues

By Lenny Sementi

After dropping back-to-back games early in January, Tuscola's boy's basketball team has run off six straight wins, mostly on the back of a smothering defense but this past Tuesday, Jan. 24 it was the offense that stirred the pot. The Warriors put one over the 20-point plateau, two over the 15-point standard and one more in double digits in an 80-66 non-conference over a solid Arthur Okaw Christian School squad.

Jordan Quinn notched a game-high 21 points in the victory on 9 of 15 from the floor, scoring in every period. He had 6 in a big first frame helping coach Justin Bozarth's bunch to a 22-19 lead at the first buzzer. All five Warriors scored in the opening stanza and Jackson Barrett hit a three off the bench late, putting six players in the official scorebook in the first 8-minutes of the contest.

"Jordan has maintained a consistency in both leading us in scoring as well as rebounding over the last several games. A lot of what we do on both ends of the court flows through him, and he's answering each time we call on him."

Josiah Hortin ended his night just 2 points back, delivering a season-high 19 points,

including 17 in the second half. Parker James was next up with a career-best 18 points. He and Quinn both stepped outside the arc in the second in a back-and-forth contest keeping the Warriors in front by 1 after the first 16 points of action, heading to the break up 39-38.

Kam Sweetnam also found double digits draining a three in every frame on his way to 12 points in the contest. Both he and James hit threes in the third, opening up the middle for Quinn and Chris Boyd to attack the paint. The duo combined for 8 points in the Warriors' 23-point outburst in the third.

Hortin attacked inside and out after the break and found his way to the free-throw line. The junior hit a three early in the fourth, then a runner and capped the Warrior victory with a 3-for-4 effort at the line down the stretch. James banged his way to a pair of buckets late as the Warriors moved to 19-3 overall on the season.

"Our defense wasn't very sharp early tonight," stated Bozarth. "The out hustled us early on, but we played really well in the second half. We were able to get consecutive stops and get out in transition to score easy baskets at the other end."



THE LADY WARRIORS and their coaches stand together with the trophy they earned in the CIC Championship Jan. 26. The Lady Warriors remain undefeated in their season with 26 wins. *Photo by Tracy Hornaday.*

Coach Kohlbecker's crew adds another

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's girl's basketball team went back-to-back in this past week's league tourney. They secured some more hardware and wins 25 and 26 in the historic season with victories in both semifinals and finals of the Central Illinois Conference.

Coach Kohlbecker's crew ran past host Warrensburg-Latham in the final four 52-37 and then pulled away later from a very athletic Decatur St. Teresa squad for a 41-33 in the championship game, hoisting the trophy for the second straight season.

"The title game matched similar styles of play, two fast teams that defend well," stated the coach. "I thought our team defense was outstanding and our kids followed the game plan. We held them to 5 points in 2 quarters by not allowing them to run their offense, as they'd like. The 3 3's we gave up in the third were from a combination of losing track of a good shooter and

me not making the proper defensive adjustment."

Harley Woodard hit a pair of buckets in the first frame in the title tilt with St Teresa. last Thursday, Jan. 26 but those were the only two FGs for the Warriors in the frame as the Lady Bulldogs ran out to a 9-5 lead after one period of action. Enter Ava Boyer. The super sophomore sandwiched a pair of treys around a runner, scoring 6 of her game and career-high 13 points in the second frame. She was good on both her attempts from outside the arc in the contest while accounting for 4 rebounds, 4 steals and 2 assists in the contest. Izzy Wilcox tickled the bottom of the net from deep as well in the stanza, helping the Warriors not only erase the early deficit but move in front by 6, entering the break on top 20-14. Boyer hit her three to knot it at 14 midway thru the pivotal period and the Warrior defense did the rest, stymieing the Bulldogs

for the final 4-minutes of the quarter.

Tuscola withstood a St T. run fueled by three treys early in the third and tightened up on defense late in the period, handing coach K. a narrow 30-28 lead heading to the final 8 minutes of action. Wilcox hit her second three of the night 2 minutes into the second half and Woodard, Sydney Moss and Lia Patterson all found the scorebook late in the quarter.

Tuscola slammed the door in the final stanza allowing just 1 FG and Boyer gave them some breathing room by connecting on a three-ball. Moss complemented the perimeter attack with a pair of baskets down low and Patterson finished off a runner

late for insurance points.

Eights were wild for Moss, scoring 8 points while also securing 8 rebounds. Patterson found her way to 5 rebounds and 2 steals and added 5 points to the team totals. Ella Boyer banged the boards hard, grabbing 5 rebounds and dished out 2 assists.

"Ava came up with big plays on both ends in the fourth, the biggest being a huge three and a driving dish to Syd for an 'and 1,'" Kohlbecker said. "Everyone played well and Harley, Syd, Lia and Ava rebounded well. These girls have now won back-to-back conference championships which is a testament to their collective work ethic and toughness."



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