

Community Sports



Warriors boy's basketball team bounces back from semi-final loss

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's boy's basketball team rebounded from a tough 69-64 loss to Decatur St. Teresa in the semi-finals of the Central Illinois Conference to collect their 21st win of the season in a thrilling 53-48 victory over Shelbyville in the third-place contest. The double-digit conquest over the Rams avenged their only loss in the league from earlier in the season and one of only four on the year.

Both teams struggled offensively early, but a late surge in the first and an early push in the second put the Rams in front 14-6 with under 5 minutes left to go in the opening half. Kam Sweetnam hit a runner late in the second period and Parker James stepped outside the arc for a three with 4 seconds left in the stanza, pulling coach Justin Bozarth's bunch to within one at the break trailing 21-20.

The two teams traded buckets throughout the third but a late surge in the waning minutes of the game fueled by a free throw barrage sealed the deal on the win. Josiah Hortin, Colton Musgrave, and Jordan Quinn connected on 7 of 9 from the charity stripe in the final 3 minutes of the contest

combating a pair of threes from the Rams. Jackson Barrett took a big charge with 18 seconds left, leading to points at the line for the Warriors at the opposite end of the court.

Sweetnam was tops in the scoring category with 18 points, 16 of which came in the final 16 minutes of action. The sophomore sharpshooter finished off four threes hitting two in each of the final two stanzas. James and Hortin both traveled above the double-digit plateau in the contest as well, scoring 11 and 10, respectively.

"For as discouraged as we were with our defense after the St. T game, we responded really well against Shelbyville," stated the coach. "No one signs up for a tournament in hopes to play in the third-place game. Usually, the winner of those games is the team that is ready to compete for no other reason than they hate losing. We started out the game down 11-1, as we couldn't get a ball to fall in the basket. But, we continued to guard at a really high level on the other end. Parker came in the game and went 3-3 from the three-point line in the first half and added another

bucket as well. He really steadied us once he entered the game. Kam caught fire in the third, connecting on 4 straight threes, which pushed our lead to double digits."

In the battle of the two, three seeds in the host St. T semi-final trouble and a stellar free throw display from the Bulldogs proved to be the difference. St. T connected on 9 of 13 in the fourth from the line and scored 18 of their 33 points in the second half from the same place, securing their spot in the title tilt.

Tuscola scratched its way into the game late on the back of a barrage from outside the arc that included threes from Hortin, Sweetnam, James and Quinn, but it was not enough. Quinn accounted for three treys in the final frame on his way to a team-best 20 points. Hortin was right on his heels scoring 19 points in the game, while James tallied 10 off the bench. Sweetnam was just one back with 9 points to his credit.

"The semi-final versus St. T was a really good high school basketball game. We played really well offensively and executed our sets vs. their 2-3 zone," commented the coach. "Jordan and Josiah shot the ball really well and Parker continues to be efficient and consistent in his scoring role off the bench. It seems every time we play St. T, the team who wins the rebounding battle typically wins the game. We were outrebounded 25-18 and could not get timely defensive stops when we needed them."



COLTON MUSGRAVE (10) jumps up high for two points during the game against the Shelbyville Rams Feb. 3. Tuscola won 53-48. Photo by Dominik Stallings.

Lady Warriors look to win CIC crown

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's girl's basketball team notched win number 29 on the season remaining unbeaten while collecting at least part of the Central Illinois Conference regular season title in a victory over St. Teresa last Thursday, Feb. 2 in Decatur. Coach Tim Kohlbecker's squad rallied past the Bulldogs a week ago in the CIC tourney championship game, but this time led from start to finish in a

39-34 league victory. The Warriors can clinch the outright title with a win over a scrappy Central A&M this Thursday, Feb. 9 at home during their senior night.

The second-ranked Warriors utilized big nights from Sydney Moss and Harley Woodard in the win. Moss led all with 11 points and Woodard was just one back, adding 10 points to the official scorebook. The duo did most of their damage down low and also hit the boards hard, securing a combined 12 rebounds. Woodard grabbed 4 rebounds on the offensive end, putting back a pair, one of which came in the pivotal first frame. The senior wing scored 6 points in the first 6 minutes of the game, complementing the outside game. Isabelle Wilcox, who hit a pair from outside the arc in the opening stanza, helped hand coach K. a 17-8 advantage after

one period of action.

Moss and Wilcox both hit buckets down low in the final minutes and the Warriors sealed the deal on the win at the charity stripe, hitting 7 of 8 from the free throw line in the fourth quarter. Ava Boyer was good on 3 of 4 from the stripe down the stretch. Big sister Ella checked in with 8 points in the contest. The sisters each found their way to 3-steals in the contest as did sophomore speedster Lia Patterson.

"Both games with St. T were physical battles. We are a lot alike defensively," stated coach Kohlbecker. "We had far too many turnovers off the dribble that allowed them easy points. The majority of their first-half points directly resulted from our turnovers. It's simple fundamentals that are fixable. I love that our scoring was balanced and

our defensive intensity was at a level that it carried our offense."

They opened their week with a dominating 60-27 road win over Macon Meridian on Monday, Jan. 30. Moss led all on a near-perfect night from the field. She hit 10 of 11 from the floor in a 21-point outburst that included 7 rebounds, 3 steals and 2 assists. The elder Boyer was next up with 13 points landing 1 point shy of the 1,000 point mark in her career. She did a little bit of everything delivering 2 threes, 2 steals and 3 assists. Ava added to the steal totals with 3 of her own and also shared the ball, donating 3 assists to the cause. Wilcox found her way to the double-digit plateau scoring 10 points while grabbing 5 rebounds. Liz Patterson and Molly Macaulay posted a combined 7 rebounds, 5 steals and 3 assists.

Boyer reaches 1,000 points

By Lenny Sementi

Senior hoop star and Illinois State University softball signee Ella Boyer became the 11th Warrior in school history to eclipse the 1,000-point mark for the girl's basketball program. She accomplished the feat on her first basket of the game in a 46-22 non-conference win over Windsor-Stewardson-Strasburg this past Tuesday, Jan. 31.

"I really didn't know that I was close to the milestone going into this year," stated Ella Boyer. "And, really didn't know I was close until two games before. I knew going into the game that I needed 2 points, so there was a little pressure, but my teammates helped take some of the pressure away."

Boyer led all with 14 points in the victory on a day the nation celebrated National Girls and Women in Sports. One night prior, coach Tim Kohlbecker pulled the plug in a game at Meridian, shutting

down the fourth-year player after climbing to within one of the record in a blowout victory over Meridian saving the celebration for the hometown faithful.

Ella, the all-time Tuscola 3-point leader and her younger sister Ava both drained three balls in the first frame, as did fellow senior Izzy Wilcox, as Kohlbecker's crew ran out to a 20-4 lead after one. Zoey Thomason hit one from outside the arc in the second stanza and Ella Boyer hit one more in the third, ending any hope of a Hawks comeback.

The state's second-ranked team limited Meridian to just 4 field goals in the first half and never allowed them to reach the double-digit plateau in any one period. Harley Woodard was next up with 10 points on 4 of 7 from the floor while grabbing 7 rebounds. Sydney Moss and Wilcox combined to grab 15 rebounds and scored 6 points apiece. Lia Patterson

added 4-rebounds and a game-high 5-assists to her season stat sheet.

"It's always great seeing one of your players reach a milestone like 1000 points," commented Kohlbecker. "I was really happy for Ella, especially since she is one of the most competitive kids I've ever coached. And besides being a great shooter, she has developed an all-around game and helps us in so many areas. They played a challenging, sagging, over-rotating defense we had to adjust too."

Other Warriors to surpass 1000 points include Janeen Sutherland leading the way with 1496 points, Kendra Blaudow follows with 1422, then comes Susan Harris 1417, Erin Weaver 1277, Andrea Wax 1269, Johanna Wienke 1151, Lindsey Troikie 1145, Kim Waugh 1131 and the most recent Emma Henderson notching 1001 in 2017 on the final basket of her career.

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