

# We love our Warriors!

## Warriors boys' basketball team goes to state championship

By Lenny Sementi

Parker James kickstarted Tuscola's offense with an early bucket in the Elite 8 and then exploded in the second half as the Warriors punched their ticket for a trip to the State Farm Center. James finished off an ally-oop layup giving Tuscola its first and last lead of the game as coach Justin Bozarth's bunch moved in front and stayed there, downing a good Mounds Meridian squad 74-53 at the SIU Carbondale super-sectional on March 6.

"When Parker gets a basket early, it seems to give him confidence that carries throughout the game," stated Bozarth. "So,

as a group, the coaches decided to run a play for him to score on our first possession and the guys executed it perfectly and Parker just kept getting better from that point forward."

On the back of the opening play, the Warriors ran out to an 8-2 lead and extended it to 17-5 after one. The black and gold spread the wealth on the offensive end throughout the historic evening, and it was never more evident than in the second quarter as the Warriors put five players in all in the second 8 minutes of action en route to a 34-18 lead at the break. Kam Sweetnam hit a big three mid-way through the period, forcing

Mounds to extend their defense, allowing Chris Boyd to open air down low. Sweetnam tossed in 14 points in the contest, including a pair of three's while Boyd donated 11 points to the offensive cause. Jordan Quinn attacked the lane as well in the frame scoring 4 of his 12 points in the final two minutes of the first half.

Roderick Gatewood, one of the top 50 scorers in state history with over 2,200 points in his career, and his Meridian teammates pressed the issue early in the second half, trapping all over the floor and forcing turnovers on three straight possessions. The defensive adjustment came

after a three by Sweetnam early in the third, helping Meridian cut the lead to nine 47-38, but that's as close as they would get. A timeout by Bozarth settled the Warriors down, allowing them to find the open man, which happened to be James.

The super soph hit three buckets to end the period and then opened the final stanza with a three-ball pushing Tuscola's advantage seventeen 55-38, all but ending the hopes of a comeback. James ended his night with a career-best 25-points, including a pair of big threes. Josiah Hortin tacked on 8 points in the game, 6 in the fourth and facilitated the offense

to the tune of 5-assists. Tuscola shared the ball, notching assists on 18 of 31 made field goals.

Tuscola collected win number 30 on the season, moving to 30-6 overall, earning a spot

in the final four and a trip to the State Farm Center. The Warriors are making the second trek to the state tournament and will look to bring home for the first time in school history.

## Warriors bring home third place trophy

By Lenny Sementi

Not many high school teams in any sport get to end the season with a victory, but that's exactly what Tuscola's historic boy's basketball team did. The Warriors moved to 31-7 on the year with a 69-46 victory over Bloomington Cornerstone Academy in the third-place game of the IHSAA's state 1A boys basketball tournament dubbed the nation's original 'March Madness.'

Tuscola earned its second berth in the state tourney in program history with a victory over Mounds Meridian on Monday, March 6 and secured the first boy's basketball trophy in school history with the win over Cornerstone. Coach Justin Bozarth's bunch fell to the third-place contest in a low-scoring affair, dropping the state semi-final to state runner-up Scales Mound 40-27. Cornerstone fell to the eventual state champs Waterloo Gibault Catholic in the first semi and entered the third place skirmish boasting 31 wins on the season.

The Warriors did the dirty work in the win over Cornerstone, collecting 31 rebounds, including 10 on the offensive end scoring 8 second-chance points. Chris Boyd put a pair back early in the game on his way to 17 points and 10 rebounds. Jor-

dan Quinn joined Boyd on the double-double plateau scoring 13 points and securing 12 rebounds. Quinn put back an offensive rebound in the first half as well, helping the Warriors to a 32-19 lead at the break.

Quinn found his way to the rim for the first bucket of the game 30 seconds in and Kam Sweetnam followed with a three, giving Tuscola a lead they would hold for the next 31 minutes and 30 seconds. A lead they would drive to as big as 23 points late in the contest. They attacked inside and out, hitting 8 threes in the game while scoring 38 points in the paint shooting 56% from the field in the game.

The Warriors all but ended the suspense with a 7-point run early in the fourth quarter with a Sweetnam 3-ball sandwiched between buckets in the low post by Boyd. Sweetnam led all in the game with 19 points also adding 5 assists and 3 rebounds. Quinn and Parker James found double digits as well, scoring 13 and 10, respectively.

"Not many get to win the last game," stated Bozarth. "These guys are amazing. We have been doing this for almost five months and never lost focus. It's tough to play the third-place game after losing in the semis but they

never wavered."

Tuscola has used the land outside the arc to their advantage all season long, but in the semi versus Scales Mound, they found the bottom of the net just once from long range and were outscored in the lane 20-6. Scales entered the tourney boasting a 32-5 record returning to state after a third-place finish a year ago.

"We just were not hitting shots," stated Quinn. "At some point, they start falling, but that never happened partly due to their defense. We thought going in with the game on a bigger floor that we would have more space to work but they covered it up very well."

The two teams traded points as both struggled to find success on the offensive end early on. Boyd put in a pair from the charity stripe to put the Warriors up 7-5 with over 4 minutes to go in the first frame. That's where it would stay for the next 6-minutes before Scales knotted it at 7. Quinn followed with a pair of buckets and the Warriors ran off 6 straight points, moving in front 13-8 following a made free throw. Scales answered with a run of their own and hit a big bucket with 13 seconds left in the half, moving to within 2 at the break, 15-13.

### STATE FINALS

#### TUSCOLA (27)

	fg-fga	ft-fta	3-3a	reb	a	s	pf	tp
Quinn	2-11	3-5	0-4	11	1	0	1	7
Boyd	0-3	3-4	0-0	3	0	0	2	3
James	1-5	0-0	0-3	4	1	1	4	2
Hortin	2-7	0-0	1-4	7	3	1	0	5
Sweetnam	3-10	0-0	2-7	2	0	1	4	8
Musgrave	0-2	2-2	0-2	2	0	2	3	2
Barrett	0-2	0-0	0-2	2	0	0	0	0
Woodard	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0
Kurtz	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0
Spillman	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	8-40	8-11	3-22	31	5	5	14	27

FG%-20% FT%-73% 3-FG%-14% Turnovers-11

#### SCALES MOUND (40)

FG-13-46 (28%) FT-11-16 (69%) 3FG-3-18 (17%) Reb 35; TO-6.

Scales Mound	5	8	14	13	-	40
Tuscola	7	8	4	8	-	27

### THIRD PLACE STATE FINALS

#### TUSCOLA (69)

	fg-fga	ft-fta	3-3a	reb	a	s	pf	tp
Quinn	5-8	0-0	3-5	12	6	0	0	13
Boyd	7-10	3-5	0-0	11	0	2	2	17
James	6-11	0-0	1-3	3	4	2	0	13
Hortin	1-4	0-0	1-2	2	2	0	1	3
Sweetnam	7-12	0-2	2-7	3	6	2	0	16
Musgrave	0-1	2-2	0-0	0	1	1	0	2
Barrett	1-1	0-0	1-1	0	0	0	0	3
Woodard	1-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	1	2
Kurtz	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0
Spillman	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	28-48	5-9	8-18	31	19	7	4	69

FG%-58% FT%-56% 3-FG%-44% Turnovers-10

#### COVERSTONE CHRISTIAN (46)

FG-21-49 (43%) FT-1-3 (33%) 3FG-3-19 (16%) Reb 35; TO-6.

Coverstone Ch.	12	7	19	8	-	46
Tuscola	20	12	18	19	-	69

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