

Bulldogs, Wildcats set up rematch

Written by Jim Metcalfe

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ADA — One did it its usual way.
So did the other.

No matter which way they did it, Elida and Bath set up a third matchup in 2012-13, this time in Saturday's Division II District finals (7 p.m.) at Ohio Northern University's Sports Center in Ada, with impressive victories Tuesday.

The Bulldogs (17-7) downed Lexington (16-9) 64-49 in the nightcap using its developing steady half-court defense and balanced attack, while Bath (21-4) crushed Willard (18-7) 84-60 by using its withering full- and half-court press and fast-break attack.

The Bulldogs placed four players in double digits in the second game: Louis Gray with 17 (3 treys), Dakota Mathias a double-double with 13 points and 11 boards (along with 7 assists), Austin Allemeier 12 and Aric Thompson 10.

"Our offense has developed a lot over the course of the season; we weren't even close to having that kind of balance earlier this year," Elida mentor Denny Thompson said. "Early on, we just stood around and waited for Dakota to do something. Now, the kids are moving and making themselves available; they realize that if they do so, Dakota will find them. He is more than willing to take advantage of what defenses are doing to him to find the open guys. They are hitting those shots; that is the key now. Lexington was very physical with him, maybe more than anyone so far." The Minutemen had only one hit double digits: Mason Willeke with a game-high 23 to go with a game-high 12 boards.

"He came a long way from last year; he was the only starter we had back from the team that lost to Elida here in the District finals and really the only one with any varsity experience," Lexington coach Scott Hamilton explained. "He almost tripled his scoring average and you saw what he can do. This team more than exceeded expectations this season and he was the undisputed leader; he had the ball in his hands a lot and the others filled in roles nicely."

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Elida, like its WBL colleague (Bath) earlier, took the lead for good right off the bat: a triple by Gray at 7:25. With Lexington paying a lot of attention to Mathias, constantly rotating defenders and running double-teams at him, Gray was the beneficiary, scoring eight of his points in the opener. On the other end, the Bulldogs employed their triangle-and-2 — along with occasional man defense — against Willeke and the Minutemen and it worked pretty well. When Max Stambaugh hit the first-of-2 freebies at 53.3 ticks, that put the Orange and Black up 15-7.

Willeke started to get untracked in the second period; in fact, he scored all 13 of the Minutemen's points, including a pair of triples. Mathias also started to get untracked, scoring seven, including 5-of-6 at the line. However, the Bulldogs spread out their 17 markers amongst five players. Thus, their lead grew to as much as 27-10. When Mathias hit the first-of-2 singles with 00.3 ticks left, the halftime margin was 32-20.

Elida continued to add to its edge in the third, reaching their biggest lead of the night to that point of 19 four times, the last at 51-32 on a Thompson 3-ball at 1:16. They did a solid job on Willeke, holding him to only three points in the span. When Daniel Truax put back a miss at 43 ticks, the scoreboard read 51-34, Elida.

The Bulldogs had their biggest lead of the game at 56-34 early in the fourth as Thompson hit a triple and Allemeier a deuce. Lexington tried to make a game of it but could only get within 13 toward the end of the game as the benches emptied.

Elida finished up 21-of-47 overall, 7-of-23 long range, for 44.7 percent and 15-of-18 at the line (83.3%). They assumed 30 caroms (5 offensive) as Marquevious Wilson added five; and added a mere five turnovers and 14 fouls.

"What is true of our offense is also true of our defense; we have really stepped it up there in the last 10 games or so. It's reminiscent of what we did last year on the defensive end," Coach Thompson added. "We're a work in progress with our defense and the kids keep getting better with it. It was good for us to see it in action tonight; we'll go back to the films and work on what breakdowns we did have. However, for us to have a chance against Bath (who won both the Elida tip-Off Classic final and the WBL matchup this season), it's going to come down to not having turnovers and rebounding. We've had eight turnovers our last two games and if we can continue to do that, we are capable offensively." Lexington ended up 18-of-55 shooting (7-of-27 beyond the arc) for 32.7 percent and 8-of-10 at the line (80%); with 34 rebounds, 11 offensive, as Truax and Zach Temple added six each; and with 10 miscues and 20 fouls.

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In the first contest of the evening, the Wildcats used their 2-2-1 full-court pressure and trapping half-court look to force nine turnovers in the first period alone (21 for the game) and fuel a blistering pace. Bath netted the first 11 points of the game — with Sullivan (20 markers on 4 treys; 5 boards, 6 assists, 4 steals, 2 blocks) dropping in two trios to lead the way. Sullivan canned three treys among his 11 first-period points and Bath led by as much as 27-7 on a baseline drive by Logan Rockhold (18 counters) at 42 seconds. Nick Davidson (3 steals) hit a 3-ball from the left corner with 6.1 ticks showing to make the score 27-12, Bath.

“That’s what we strive to do; get into our game quickly. We want to force turnovers and get into transition,” Bath coach Doug Davis said. “That’s been what we’ve done all year and it’s worked pretty well. Getting off to a good start relaxes us; we settle in and play good basketball, like we did tonight.”

Bath started off on fire, hitting 10-of-14 shots, including 4-of-7 long range. They finished 34-of-56, 11-of-22 downtown, for 60.7 percent.

The scoring pace didn’t slow down much in the second period — Bath hit 10-of-16 — as the Wildcats continued to push the pace with their defense and force the Crimson Flashes to shoot shots quicker than they seemed to like. This time, it was Cole Chambers leading the way, netting 10 of his 18 counters (with 2 treys), and Rockhold knocking down eight (also with 2 bombs). Hayden Adams dropped in seven of his game total of 13 for the Flashes but it was to no avail. Bath’s margin continued to grow and reached 24 twice, the second time at 51-27 on a 3-ball by Chambers at the horn.

The tempo slowed down in the third period but it really didn’t make much difference as to the outcome. Bath went on building a bigger lead, reaching as high as 33 — 63-30 on a Sullivan basket at the 4-minute mark — before a Matt Cok (18 points) layin off a steal with 2.1 ticks on the board got Willard within 68-40.

Bath built its lead to 31 quickly in the fourth — a triple by Doug Sanders — and never fell below 22 as the benches emptied late.

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“Our goal offensively is to either get a layup or a 3. We got plenty of the former,” Davis added. “We’ve shot 33 percent from 3 this year, so we’ve been effective, though not like we were tonight. We looked at our shot chart at the half and outside of one shot from 15 feet, we met our goal. We can live with that. When you throw in our balance, that makes us very difficult to defend, especially when we are shooting from the perimeter like we did tonight.”

Willard ended up 22-of-54 from the floor (4-of-18 3-balls) for 40.7 percent and 12-of-15 at the line (80%); grabbed 29 caroms (14 offensive) as Adams led with seven; and with 10 fouls. Jay Cok added 12 points.

Bath was 5-of-5 from charity; secured 27 boards (7 offensive); and with 16 errors and 16 fouls. Connor Rockhold was the fourth Wildcat in twin digits with 13.

Game 2

ELIDA (64)

Trent Cutlip 0-0-0, David Diller 0-2-2, Max Stambaugh 2-1-6, Austin Allemeier 5-0-12, Louis Gray 5-4-17, Aric Thompson 4-1-10, Dakota Mathias 3-7-13, Trent Long 0-0-0, Clark Etzler 0-0-0, Marquevious Wilson 2-0-4, Patrick Brockert 0-0-0, Jamil Johnson 0-0-0. Totals 14/24-7/23-15/18-64.

LEXINGTON (49)

Logan Bastin 1-0-2, Zach Temple 2-0-6, Trent Richwine 3-0-6, Mason Willeke 6-8-23, Matty Barkett 0-0-0, Joey Zahn 3-0-8, Andru Switzer 0-0-0, Jordan Wells 0-0-0, Nick Leasure 0-0-0, Daniel Rinehart 0-0-0, Bryan Truax 2-0-4, Joey Vore 0-0-0, Tyler Johnson 0-0-0, Michael Boals 1-0-2, Jonah Yausey 0-0-0. Totals 11/28-7/27-8/10-49.

Score by Quarters:

Elida 15 17 19 13 - 64

Lexington 7 13 14 17 - 49

Three-point goals: Elida 7-23 (Gray 3-6, Allemeier 2-5, Stambaugh 1-3, Thompson 1-6, Wilson 0-1, Mathias 0-2), Lexington 7-27 (Willeke 3-9, Temple 2-4, Zahn 2-4, Switzer 0-1, Wells 0-1, Boals 0-1, Rinehart 0-2, Barkett 0-2, Richwine 0-3).

Game 1

WILLARD (60)

Nick Davidson 2-1-6, Hayden Adams 6-1-13, Matt Cok 6-4-18, Carson Ebert 1-0-3, Corey Bohach 2-0-4, Broson Owens 0-0-0, Jay Cok 3-6-12, Gabin Hunter 1-0-2, Tristan Buss 1-0-2. Totals 18/36-4/18-12/15-60.

BATH (84)

Colin Gossard 0-0-0, Taren Sullivan 8-0-20, Connor Rockhold 6-0-13, Cole Chamber 7-1-18, Logan Rockhold 7-2-18, Hayden Atkins 0-0-0, Doug Sanders 3-0-7, Tyler Baxter 0-0-0, Andrew Renner 0-0-0, Hunter Weis 1-0-2, Cam Jenkins 0-0-0, Trent Jones 2-2-6. Totals 23/34-11/22-5/5-84.

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Willard 12 15 13 20 - 60

Bath 27 24 17 16 - 84

Three-point goals: Willard 4-18 (M. Cok 2-3, Ebert 1-5, Davidson 1-6, Adams 0-1, Bohach 0-1, Owens 0-1, Buss 0-1), Bath 11-22 (Sullivan 4-9, Chambers 3-4, L. Rockhold 2-5, C. Rockhold 1-1, Sanders 1-1, Renner 0-2).