

Jays outlast Big Green in tournament action

Written by Sean LaFontaine

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VAN WERT – The Ottoville Big Green and St. John's Blue Jays faced off Friday night at Van Wert High School in Division IV sectional-final tournament action.

In a high-intensity defensive battle, St. John's out-last-ed Ottoville to take the sectional crown, 52-41.

St. John's got out to an early lead 11-8 after the first quarter but Ottoville struck back in the second.

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Down by five with under four minutes to go in the second quarter, the Big Green sparked a run. Luke Schimmoeller started the run with short jumper and Tyler Roby followed that up with a jumper of his own to cut the lead to one. A pair of Brandt Landin free throws gave Ottoville a 20-19 lead, which they carried into hal time.

Head coach Aaron Elwer spoke about his team's first-half struggles.

"A few things occurred in that first half. We had some foul trouble and that's the first time in a long time we had to deal with that," explained Elwer. "We had to try to figure out minutes and try and get through that first half. On top of that, we didn't make many shots. I thought our shot selection was really good, so I can't fault that; the ball just didn't go in."

On the flip side, Ottoville head coach Todd Turnwald was pleased with the way his team played early.

"I thought we got off to a good start. Brandt Landin stepped up and made some big plays early. I thought we attacked the basket pretty well, ran some decent offense and made some plays," Turnwald observed.

St. John's came out aggressive defensively in the second half, which helped them build a 5-point lead after the third quarter, 30-25.

With the Blue Jays up two late in the third quarter, St. John's gave themselves some breathing room. The Jays went on an 8-0 run led by Andy Grothouse, who had six points during the run.

The spurt put Delphos up 35-25 early in the fourth quarter but Ottoville fought back.

Schimmoeller led the Big Green charge by scoring five of the team's seven points during the run to cut the lead down to 35-32 with over five minutes to play in the game.

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But St. John's was too much.

The Blue Jays answered by scoring the next five points of the game to extend their lead to 40-32. Ottoville got as close as four but St. John's hit their free throws late to stay in front and secure a 52-41 victory.

Landin and Schimmoeller led the way for Ottoville, combining for 32 of the team's 41 points. Landin led the team with 18 and Schimmoeller added 14.

Turnwald talked about the difference for his team in the second half.

"We got down and that's how these guys are; they never pack up," continued Turnwald. "That's how they are raised and coached; they just aren't going to give up. We had them on the ropes again just like we did the other night. A couple breaks here and there and it could be a different story."

Turnwald went on to talk about his team's effort and defensive performance.

"I loved how the guys battled. We just needed that third guy to step up and score," he added. "I thought for the most part we guarded them very well tonight. They are a good 3-point shooting team and we challenged their threes and did a lot of good things, but it just didn't bounce our way tonight."

St. John's used a balanced scoring attack led by Tyler Conley with 12 points, while Grothouse and Evan Hays added 11 and 10 points, respectively.

Elwer spoke about how his team's effort defensively in the second half.

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“Our effort defensively all year has been very good. I guess it’s what we have come to expect,” added Elwer. “We turned it up another notch there in the third quarter and that led to some live-play turnovers that led to baskets or us getting to the free-throw line. Give our kids credit in a tough environment against a really well-coached team; we came out and played hard, played well and got the victory.”

St. John’s battles Miller City at 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Elida District.

Score by Quarters:

St. John’s 11 8 11 22 – 52

Ottoville 8 12 5 16 – 41

St. John’s (52)

Andy Grothouse 11, Evan Hays 10, Eric Clark 7, Aaron Hellman 3, Ryan Koester 9, Tyler Conley 12.

Ottoville (41)

Tyler Roby 2, Austin Honigford 5, Brandt Landin 18, Luke Schimmoeller 14, Colin Bendele 2.