

SPORTS

Defensive intensity leads to more points for Quaboag in win over Tigers



Aidan Gordon of Douglas holds the ball away from Quaboag's John Luyrink.



Douglas' Patrick Peloquin looks for an open teammate to pass to on the inbound.



Patrick Peloquin of Douglas goes in for a layup versus Quaboag.

BY KEN POWERS
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

DOUGLAS — The Quaboag Regional boys' varsity basketball team ratcheted up its intensity on both ends of the court in the third quarter of its game with host Douglas High on Sunday, Jan. 28 and turned a seven-point halftime lead into a 22-point advantage after three quarters, en route to a 52-32 victory.

With the win Quaboag improved to 3-11. Douglas (0-14) is still searching for its first victory on the season.

At halftime the Cougars led, 24-17, but it was still truly either team's game. In the first 16 minutes every time it looked like Quaboag was going to extend its lead into double digits — the Cougars led by nine twice in the first half — Douglas would answer with a basket or two of its own to remain within striking distance.

That changed in the third quarter when the Cougars outscored the Tigers 17-2 to take a 41-19 lead into the fourth quarter.

"In the third quarter Quaboag really started to attack the paint," said Douglas head coach Dan Spring, whose team was led in scoring by eighth grader Matt Landry (10 points) and sophomore Brian Doyle (seven points).

"Instead of running their flex play, which we were ready for, they really changed it up and went right at the front of the rim," Spring explained. "They took our bigs out

[of the lane] and attacked the paint and we weren't ready for it. We hadn't seen them do that in any of the games we saw them play. That was new to us."

Quaboag senior Alex Richard scored six of his 13 points in the third quarter while classmate Zach McCann had five of his team-high 16 in the period and junior Nick Broman added four of his six points. All three scored on a mix of drives to the hoop and shots from the perimeter.

"That was part of the focus at halftime, not settling for the outside shots," Cougars' head coach Chris Reilly said. "Alex Richard went to the hoop hard in the second half, and Nick Broman, who had a much better game for us, was really going to the hoop as well."

The key to the Quaboag offensive outburst was, however, the defense played by McCann.

"I just try to bring the energy defensively," McCann said. "I try helping out my teammates; let them know what's going on behind them because a lot of them are up on the ball. Usually, just from my presence and my helping out they usually match my defensive intensity and as a team we get more intense and we get going. We seem to get momentum based off of that defensive intensity."

Reilly, after hearing his captain's explanation about the second-half spark he supplied, completely agreed.

"When Zach heats up the team heats up; that

has been a common factor," Reilly said. "I don't think I could have said that better than Zach did. His defense, that's the part that gets us going. When Zach is playing good defense they all start playing good defense. In the second half of the season they are definitely feeding off of each other. We are definitely playing better and better as the season goes along."



Douglas' Daman Dereszkiecz lines up a 3-point attempt.

Sophomore Hayden

Perry also scored in double figures for Quaboag, scoring 10 points and hitting one of the Cougars six 3-pointers. McCann led the way from beyond the arc for Quaboag with four treys.

"The last two weeks our half-court defense has been much, much better competing with people," Reilly said. "Even the Southbridge game, which wound up getting away from us in the fourth

quarter, was just an eight-point game after the first half. We're doing a good job defensively getting back to the basics of good help man-to-man. I think our defense is leading us into better offense."

Spring said the Tigers' inexperience has hampered them throughout the season.

"The five seniors we have on the team, one of them didn't play at all last year as a junior because

he was at a different school and the other four were on the team but didn't get a lot of time," Spring explained. "So, yeah, we're inexperienced. We have two eighth-graders and four sophomores on the team. And today it didn't help that our only junior [Aidan Gordon] was hurt. He tried to go, but he wasn't the same. He's usually a lot more explosive than he was today."

Whitinsville Christian girls' basketball tops Chargers, inches closer to district berth

BY DEAN P. ST. LAURENT
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

NORTHBIDGE — The Whitinsville Christian girls' varsity basketball team played tough and snapped visiting Dual Valley Conference foe Blackstone-Millville Regional's four-game winning streak with a 45-37 win on Wednesday, Jan. 24.

"That was a huge game for us in the Dual Valley, but we have them at their place and it will be another good game," expressed Whitinsville Christian head coach Kris VandenAkker.

Coming into the contest Whitinsville Christian's main focus was to keep Blackstone-Millville's top player, Aidan Ryan, in check. Ryan is among the top scorers in the region and the Crusaders held her to just seven points.

"We did a great job on their best player Aidan Ryan, I don't know how many points she had, but she is high up

in the Central Mass. for scoring, so we worked hard on trying to prevent her from doing that to us. Sarah Moschini played on her the whole game and she did a very good job, I am very proud of Sarah," praised VandenAkker.

Early on it was a back and forth game, but Whitinsville Christian had some edge and aggressiveness to its play from the starting tip.

After Blackstone-Millville scored a quick first bucket just 26 seconds into the game, Whitinsville Christian's leading scorer Cam Richey came back with a hard fought bucket after two offensive rebounds to tie the game at 2-2.

Despite not shooting well from the field, crashing the boards and aggressive defense led to quality points for the Crusaders. Whitinsville Christian ended the first half on a 10-2 run to go into halftime leading, 26-18.

The Crusaders didn't trail for the remainder of the game.

"I don't want to know what our shooting percentage was because it was not very good, so I am just very thankful that we are walking out of here with a win," VandenAkker stated. "That is one thing that we have been stressing, being aggressive and crashing boards in order to get an easier shot up."

Coming out of the half, Blackstone-Millville started strong offensively and opened the third quarter on a 6-2 run. They slowly cut into their deficit, going into the fourth only down four points, 31-27.

Although the Chargers made a run at the lead, the Crusaders buckled back down defensively in the fourth and outscored Blackstone-Millville, 14-10, to win the game by their halftime lead of eight points.

"The whole team played great defensively," a pleased VandenAkker said of the effort.

Richey was Whitinsville Christian's

go-to scorer down the stretch and netted 6 of her game high 17-points in the fourth quarter, which included a clutch contested 3-pointer to help propel a 9-0 run midway through the period.

After their big win against a league opponent, Whitinsville Christian doesn't have time to celebrate. They have bigger plans moving forward and are going to look to get better for their next game.

"Our motto is that we have to get better, so every game we see what we did poorly — tonight was our shooting percentage — so every game we just work on getting better. Our main focus is getting into the tournament, we are 7-4 so we are getting close," concluded VandenAkker as the team needs to notch three more victories in their final 11 games to become eligible for the Central Mass. Division 4 district tournament.