

BOYS BASKETBALL

## Fort Defiance boys basketball grinds out win over Riverheads

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Jan 26, 2022

GREENVILLE — Fort Defiance's Tyreek Veney was having a miserable shooting night until his team needed him the most.

The Indian junior hit two huge tie-breaking baskets in the fourth quarter Tuesday, including the eventual game-winner with 23.9 seconds remaining for a grind-it-out 39-35 victory over the Riverheads Gladiators in Shenandoah District boys basketball.

Veney had only two first-half field goals until his heroics helped Fort (5-8, 2-3) stop a five-game losing streak.

"Tyreek was definitely having his struggles shooting, but he kept playing his ass off," Fort Defiance head coach Brandon Fulk said. "When we needed the crucial baskets, he got them for us. He also probably had his best rebounding game of the season."

The Indians trailed 28-24 after third periods, but Samuel Garber hit a 3-pointer and Bradley Hebb scored off a turnover for a 29-28 lead at the 6:32 mark.

After Riverheads tied the game at 29, Veney buried a 3-pointer with 4:29 left. The Indians nursed their lead until the Gladiators' Tye Morris calmly converted a one-and-one to deadlock the game again at 35 with 29.5 seconds on the clock.

Following a timeout, Veney took the inbounds pass near half-court and raced behind the defense for the winning layup.

Riverheads' chance for a potential tying basket faded when the ball was lost out-of-bounds under the rim with 6.1 seconds.

The game was the typical rock fight between the two county rivals that have had trouble scoring all season, and Tuesday's edition saw a boatload of bricks clanging off the rims.

"I don't care if the final score was 2-0 as long as we had the two," Fulk said. "This was a typical game for us lately where we can't score consistently."

During the five-game skid, the Indians scored 45, 24, 51, 39 and 28 points. The victory gave Fort the season sweep of Riverheads (4-7, 1-5), which was playing its fourth game in five nights.

The Gladiators came into the game still sitting No. 7 in the Region 1B power ratings, one spot out of qualifying for the regional tournament.

While the Indians made just enough shots to win the game, the Gladiators' struggles at the rim continue to persist and haunt them as they are shooting only 35 percent on the season, which will drop more after just 26 percent Tuesday.

"We have been in a lot of these rock fights all season," Riverheads head coach Patrick Weller said. "That has been the story of the year in not hitting shots. It's not like we are shooting bad shots. We had six or seven good looks in the lane every quarter tonight, but they just aren't falling."

Weller lamented having only five turnovers for the game and holding a team to 39 points, and not coming away with the victory.

You do those two things and it should be a win," he said. "It is disheartening. There is no sense in getting angry because the guys are doing so many other things right."

Fort scored the first six points of the game and led 10-8 after eight minutes. The Gladiators used a 6-0 run in the second quarter, keyed by consecutive baskets from Ryan Farris, to tie the game for the first time at 14.

Fort's Garber responded with two buckets for an 18-14 margin before the Gladiators' Bennett Dunlap closed the half with a 3-pointer for a low-scoring 18-17 slugfest.

"We had a great start," Fulk said. "I am proud of the way we have been starting games. It is the sustained shooting that is holding us back."

Dunlap carried his stroke into the third period, hitting a bomb in the opening minute to give the Gladiators their first lead at 20-18. Dunlap's third bomb of the quarter and fourth straight since the end of the first half extended the margin to 28-21 at the 3:03 mark.

Fort, despite making only one field goal in the quarter, which came with 33.4 seconds, and going 4-of-8 at the foul line, somehow was down four at the horn.

"The guys showed a tremendous will to win after we got down seven, especially on the road," Fulk said. "I couldn't be prouder of them."

"We let Dunlap get open looks in the third because we lost floor awareness, but overall we made him put the ball on the floor. We won this game on the glass with (Josh) Jones and Garber. We limited their number of extended possessions," the Fort coach said.

Veney led the Indians with 11 points, while Garber tallied nine. Dunlap paced the Gladiators with 12, all coming on 3-pointers, and Farris added 11.

Riverheads has the remainder of the week off to rest up and get in some practice time before returning to the court Feb. 1 at slumping Staunton. "We haven't had a practice since Jan. 13," Weller said. "We are going to use the next few days to build confidence in our shooting."

The Indians have a non district road trip Thursday across the mountain at William Monroe before returning to district play Friday at home against the Storm.

Riverheads won the jayvee game 60-46. William Gardner sparked the Gladiators with a game-high 23 points, while Henley Dunlap added 11. For the Indians, Gio Armendariz Cruz had 15 and Carter Berry 10.

FORT DEFIANCE (39) — Simmons 1 1-2 3, Johnson 2 3-5 7, Jones 2 0-0 4, Garber 4 0-0 9, Veney 4 2-6 11, Hebb 1 1-2 3, Gutshall 1 0-0 2, TOTALS 15 7-15 39.

RIVERHEADS (35) — Byer 0 1-2 1, Farris 5 1-2 11, Milo 0 0-2 0, Lightner 1 0-0 2, Dunlap 4 0-0 12, Morris 1 2-2 5, Williams 1 2-6 4, TOTALS 12 6-14 39.

FORT DEFIANCE 10 8 6 15 — 39  
RIVERHEADS 8 9 11 7 — 35

FDHS Varsity vs Riverheads  
January 25, 2022  
At Riverheads High School

Fort Defiance broke out of its five game slump with a narrow 39 – 35 win over Riverheads in the Gladiators' gym on Tuesday night. Tyreek Veney broke a 35 – 35 tie with a score on a drive late in the fourth quarter then Kaden Johnson anchored the win making two free throws with 6 seconds left. It was a much needed win for the struggling Indians.

Fort got off to a great start. Josh Jones opened the scoring with a bucket followed by Tyreek Veney. Then Henry Gutshall took an inside pass and flipped in a nice hook shot to push the Indians out to a 6 – 0 lead. Kaden Johnson's two baskets helped nullify a Riverheads three pointer. Riverheads scored at the buzzer to make the score 10 – 8 in favor of the Indians after the first period.

Baskets by Sam Garber and Tyreek pushed the lead to 14 – 10 but then consecutive turnovers by Bradley Hebb, Tyreek, and Kaden allowed Riverheads to tie the score at 14. Sam hit two field goals to give Fort a 18 – 14 lead but Riverheads answered with a three pointer to get within one, 18 – 17, at the half.

Riverheads went on a roll when Fort's shooting went cold to start the third quarter. The Gladiators took advantage when Henry was pulled early in the quarter to run their lead to 28 – 21 as Fort continued its shooting woes. During the quarter, Riverheads made three 3-pointers. Fort managed to close at the quarter to leave the score 28 – 24.

Fort's fourth quarter began ominously with turnovers by Sam and Landon though Sam did hit a three pointer and Bradley a two pointer to tie the score at 29. Tyreek's three pointer gave Fort the lead back at 32 – 29. Riverheads' free throws pulled them within one, 32 – 31. Fortunately, Riverheads was not able to capitalize after missed shots by Bradley and Sam and another

turnover by Landon. Landon then found an opening for a field goal to give FDHS a 34 – 31 lead with just over a minute to go.

Riverheads scored in close to get within one, 34 – 33. After a missed 1 – 1 by Kaden, Landon made the first of his 1-1 to give FDHS a 35 – 33 lead with 54 seconds to go. RHS then hit two foul shots to tie the score before Tyreek’s heroics. He drove into the lane and scored with 14.6 seconds to go. Riverheads hustled down but turned the ball over with 6 seconds left. After he was intentionally fouled, Kaden made both free throws to give Fort its final margin, 39 – 35.

With the win, Fort’s district record improved to 2 – 3 and its overall record 5 – 8.

Here is Fort’s box score for the game:

<b>Name</b>	<b>FG</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>Total</b>
Landon Simmons	1	1-2	3
Drew Smith	0	0-0	0
Kaden Johnson	2	3-5	7
Josh Jones	2	0-0	4
Conner Patterson	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	4	0-0	9
Tyreek Veney	4	2-6	11
Bradley Hebb	1	1-2	3
Jack Liskey	0	0-0	0
Alphonso Bruce	0	0-0	0
Henry Gutshall	1	0-0	2
<b>FDHS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7-15</b>	<b>39</b>