

FDHS Pulls Amazing Comeback to Defeat Turner Ashby 64 - 54

Fort's basketball team and its fans will remember this game in the Turner Ashby High School gym for a long time. It was certainly a game of two different halves. The first half was beyond miserable for the Indians. Shot after shot rimmed out for them whereas TAHS was red hot, making six three-pointers. Several FDHS boys picked up early fouls and no one could get the offense started. After a buzzer-beater three pointer for the Knights, the halftime score was 32 – 17 in their favor. It looked like a repeat of last year when Fort would bow to the Knights in both games.

After the game, Coach Brandon Fulk was asked what he told the boys at halftime because he should bottle it. He said he didn't say anything special, just that "we should just play our game." It worked. The third quarter was spectacular for the Indians, outscoring their opponents 19 – 1 to turn a fifteen point deficit into a four point lead going into the fourth quarter. Then, in the fourth Tyreek Veney scored 12 points including 6 – 6 from the foul line while teammate Henry Gutshall hit all eight of his free throws in the quarter to give Fort a 64 - 54 win. It was their second consecutive win over a larger school. The twenty five point turnaround will not be soon forgotten.

The game was marred by many personal fouls. Fort had 21 called against them while Turner Ashby had 25 including many in the fourth quarter when they mistakenly fouled Fort's two best free throw shooters. For the game, Tyreek was 11 – 11 from the charity stripe while Henry was 11 – 12. As a team, Fort shot 26 – 30, 87%, which is remarkable for any team at any level.

The game started off well for Fort. Kaden Johnson missed a field goal attempt but got his own rebound and scored to open the scoring at the home of the Knights. After drawing an offensive foul, Henry grabbed a rebound and put it back in to give Fort a 4 – 0 lead but it didn't last long. Two straight three pointers by Owen Lyons gave the Knights a 6 – 4 lead before Henry scored in close to knot the game at 6's with 4:24 to go. After TAHS pushed their lead to 12 – 6, Henry again scored on a drive then Tyreek followed with two free throws to get the Indians within two with 2:02 to go. But the Knights scored on the next two possessions to make the score 16 – 10 at the end of the first.

Another three pointer to open the second quarter pushed their lead to 19 – 10 before Tyreek scored on a drive, was fouled, and sank his free throw to make it 19 – 13 with 7:05 to go. Things then took a turn for the worse for Fort as the Knights went on a scoring spree to push their lead to 24 – 13. Meanwhile, Sam Garber picked up his third personal with 4:31 to go and had to sit. Henry's two foul shots made the score 24 – 15. Jack Liskey's two free throws helped Fort creep closer at 24 – 17 before TAHS again hit a field goal and a three pointer to move their lead to 29 – 17. The miserable quarter ended with Turner Ashby hitting a buzzer-beater three pointer to give them a 32 – 17 lead at the half. Fort had made only one field goal the entire quarter.

Then came that superb third quarter: Tyreek got his offense rolling with a drive. Henry followed with one of two free throws to make the score 32 – 20. TAHS hit one of two free

throws to push their lead to 33 – 20 but it turns out this was the only point they would score in the period. Tyreek’s two free throws with 4:26 to go made the score 33 – 22 before Sam finally got his offensive game rolling with a three pointer from the top of the key. Gio Armendariz Cruz scored on a drive to pull the Indians within six at 33 – 27 with 3:30 to go. Sam again bombed in a three pointer and Gio scored again on a drive to pull the Indians within one. Henry’s spinner in the lane gave Fort its first lead since early in the game. Sam’s two pointer in the lane ended the quarter’s scoring for Fort at 36 – 33. It was a 19 – 1 quarter for the Indians.

The fourth quarter was contentious. TAHS opened with a score to pull within one but Gio answered with another driving layup. TAHS followed with two free throws but then sent Tyreek to the foul line for a one-and-one. He buried both shots returning Fort’s lead to three at 40 – 37. After a FDHS timeout with 5:50 to go, Tyreek intercepted a pass and drove the length of the court to give the Indians a five point lead. TAHS answered with another three pointer to pull back within two, 42 – 40. Tyreek then drove and scored, was fouled on the shot, and completed the three point play to make it 45 – 40. TAHS hit two jumpers sandwiched around Sam’s one of two free throws to make the score 46 – 44. Then, for the third time in the game, Tyreek scored on a drive and was fouled. His free throw pushed the lead to 49 – 44. TAHS returned with a three point play of its own to make the score 49 – 47 with 2:45 to go. Tyreek’s two free throws made it 51 – 47 then Gio gave FDHS some breathing room with another drive down the lane to make it 53 – 47. From here, Fort relied on its good foul shooting as TAHS repeatedly fouled in desperation. After a TAHS miss, Henry grabbed the rebound and was fouled. He hit his shots making it 55 – 47. Sam hit one of two free throws making it 56 – 47. Over the next two minutes, Henry would hit six more consecutive free throws while TAHS scored two field goals and a three pointer. Gio scored Fort’s last points on a nice drive which made the final score 64 – 54.

Tyreek lead Fort’s scoring with 21 while Henry banged in 19. Sam and Gio each had 10 for the Indians. Lyons led the Knights with 17 including five three pointers. Fort’s ball handling throughout the game was commendable with very few turnovers. Their field goal shooting was subpar but they made up for it at the foul line.

Fort’s Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	5	0	0-0	10
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Kaden Johnson	1	0	0-0	2
Conner Patterson	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	2	2-5	10
Tyreek Veney	5	0	11-11	21
Jack Liskey	0	0	2-2	2
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Henry Gutshall	4	0	11-12	19
TOTAL	16	2	26-30	64

Turner Ashby's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Micah Shank	0	0	1-2	1
Beau Baylor	4	0	1-6	9
Solomon Shifflett	1	1	0-0	5
Jack Fox	1	0	2-2	4
Owen Lyons	0	5	2-2	17
Mark Moseley	0	0	1-3	1
Grayson Smith	0	2	0-0	6
Nolan Bailey	3	0	3-4	9
Samuel Bass	1	0	0-0	2
TOTAL	10	8	10-19	54

Here is an article about the game which appeared in the December 2, 2022 Daily News Record:

Boys Basketball

Second-Half Rally Lifts Indians Over TA

By JOHN BREEDEN Daily News-Record



Fort Defiance's Tyreek Veney drives around Turner Ashby's Grayson Smith (Daniel Lin / DN-R)

BRIDGEWATER — After a first-half struggle, things started to slowly turn around for Fort Defiance in the second.

The Indians faced a double-digit deficit at intermission, but stormed back in the third quarter to take the lead and hold on for a 64-54 win over non-district rival Turner Ashby in boys basketball action at Larry S. Pence Gymnasium on Thursday.

Fort Defiance head coach Brandon Fulk said he told his team at half to stay confident and the shots would fall eventually.

What he felt plagued them in the first half was they were “quiet” defensively.

“We were not very physical,” Fulk said. “We didn’t do a very good job at all on the glass, we gave up a lot of second chances. We didn’t make adjustments to [Knights guard Owen Lyons] shooting the ball on the perimeter and we didn’t make him do something different with the ball on the floor. I challenged them to be the team I think we could be in the second half.”

The Indians surely lived up to Fulk’s challenge as they outscored TA 19-1 in the third quarter and coughed up only two turnovers in the second half.

Fulk said the biggest second-half number that stood out to him was that the team scored on 23 of 36 possessions.

Four different Fort players tallied double digits in points, led by senior Tyreek Veney with 21.

Fulk was “absolutely” happy with how his team shared the wealth and feels he doesn’t have a team where the ball needs to stick to one player.

“Two games in, I think we’ve been pretty patient about sharing the basketball,” Fulk said. “Finding the right guy, finding the open guy, making the right passes and trusting each other. Tyreek’s an exceptional talent, but we got a lot of other good pieces.”



Turner Ashby's Nolan Bailey drives into the paint against Fort Defiance's Henry Gutshall (Daniel Lin / DN-R)

One of the "pieces" he mentioned was junior Samuel Garber, who had 10 points on the night for the Indians (2-0). Other top scorers included senior Henry Gutshall with 19 and sophomore Gio Armendariz Cruz with 10.

Veney felt like they played more as a team in the second half after Fulk's halftime

speech in the locker room.

“I felt everybody listened to him,” Veney said. “We came out with more intensity on the defensive end. The bench came out a little bit better, when in the first half, we were a little dead. In the first half, I feel like we weren’t playing like ourselves.”

Veney said perhaps pregame jitters got to them in the first half, but that changed in the second.

He didn’t like his game at first because he couldn’t hit shots but in the second half, he said he changed his approach.

“I just started taking it to the [basket] more,” Veney said. “Tried to shoot a little bit of mid-range jump shots, just tried to see the ball go through the hole. Fortunately, I got to the free-throw line a lot and knocked them down.”

This was an away game for the Indians, but the Fort fans made their presence felt.

The crowd was lively in the second half comeback and Veney said it was awesome to see that support.

“Last year, it was like that, too, but it didn’t turn out so well for us,” Veney said. “I just appreciate all the fans coming to support us.”

If handled the right way, Fulk hopes this win will be a confidence builder on what his team can be.

He said he hopes going down in the first half will be a learning experience and that they can’t expect to be down 15 at halftime in every game and be able to rally.

“That’s a recipe for a loss,” Fulk said. “We can’t do that. We got to start better defensively [and] learn from that. We know the road’s long and tough, as far as the competition we’ll continue to see. We’ll just try to learn from it.”

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Fort Defiance's Henry Gutshall puts up a shot against Turner Ashby's Nolan Bailey (Daniel Lin / DN-R)



Fort Defiance's Henry Gutshall looks for an opening against Turner Ashby's Nolan Bailey (Daniel Lin / DN-R)