

## **Turner Ashby Tops Cold Shooting Fort Defiance 94 - 88**

Turner Ashby withstood a nice comeback from Fort Defiance and beat the visiting Indians 94 – 88 on November 30 at Turner Ashby High School. Fort roared back from being down by 22 at the half to take the lead late in the fourth quarter. The Indians lead 88 – 86 with 2:13 to go but then missed their last ten shots from the field and committed three turnovers to hand the victory to the Knights.

The first quarter was competitive. Tripp Hanger opened scoring with a 3 pointer. Gio Armendariz Cruz added one of two free throws but then the Knights sprinted to a 11 – 4 lead. TA benefited from excessive fouls called on the Indians; they were shooting bonus free throws with 4:52 left to go in the quarter. Sam Garber's three pointer helped Fort claw back as did Rhylan Martin's field goal. A second three by Sam gave Fort a 12 – 11 lead with 3:58 to go. After the home team had taken a 15 – 12 lead, Evan Braun completed a three-point play with a foul shot after a drive to knot the score at 15's with 3:09 to go. During the last three minutes of the quarter, Fort got a free throw from Jasigh Ransome, another three pointer from Tripp, a third trey from Sam, and a field goal each from Carter Fink and Carter Berry to give the Indians a 26 – 25 lead after one quarter.

The second quarter was disastrous for FDHS. During the quarter, Fort made only 2 of 28 field goal attempts including 0 – 14 from the three-point zone. Gio got a put back to fall and Jalen Alexander added a field goal with 1:44 to go. The only other points were free throws by Sam and Trey Miller. At the half, TA boasted a 54 – 32 lead.

Fort began its comeback in the third quarter. Gio made two layups, Jasigh scored on a drive, Rhylan made one of two free throws, then Sam hit two threes and a field goal. Gus Gutshall then took a nice pass from Gio and scored in close. Tripp added a three pointer but FD still trailed 68 – 52 at the 2:12 mark. Del Ray Jones made a three, then Carter Berry made a nice reverse layup to get FDHS within 13 at 70 – 57. Carter made one of two free throws, Trey added two points after an offensive rebound, Jalen scored in close, and Gio scored on a drive to get the score to 76 – 64 at the end of the third.

Fort had a fine fourth quarter for the first six minutes. Sam hit a three pointer, Jalen scored two on a put back, Jasigh hit two free throws, and Carter Fink tipped in a missed shot to make it 80 – 73 with 6:39 to go. Gio got a jumper to fall after an offensive rebound, Rhylan hit a fade-away in the lane, and Carter Berry scored on an out of bounds play to make it 80 – 79. TAHS went up 82 – 79 then Austin Metz hit a three pointer to knot the score at 82's with 4:04 left. TAHS surged to go up 86 – 82 then Del Ray hit a three pointer to get Fort within one point at the 3:16 mark. Sam then brought the Fort fans to their feet with a three pointer with 2:13 to go giving the Indians a 88 - 86 lead.

This is where the train wrecked for Fort. Over the final 2:13 they could not get the ball in the basket and committed three turnovers. Meanwhile, Turner Ashby made two field goals and four foul shots to take the 94 – 88 win.

Fort's shooting has been abhorrent. It is hard to fathom that they took 106 shots from the field during this game. They did but they missed 74 of those shots. Their field goal shooting percentage for the night was 30% after shooting just 32% in their loss against Broadway Tuesday night. At one point against Turner Ashby, the Indians missed sixteen consecutive three point shots. Free shooting is also problematic for the Indians. Tonight they made only 9 of 17 shots; for the season they are only making 52% of their foul shots. Against the Knights the Indians did a good job causing turnovers and rebounding but they were unable to turn possessions into points. All thirteen players for Fort who played scored with Sam leading the way with 24.

Two games in, things look bleak for Indian basketball. Besides atrocious shooting, ball handling is a serious problem for FDHS; the Indians had 18 turnovers against Turner Ashby. The defense has given up an average of 91.5 points in the first two games. In a pre-season letter to parents, Coach Gale asked them to give Fort until January to learn the new system. They have a long way to go.

Grandfather notes: Gus' playing time wasn't much better in this game than the last. He played a little over four minutes. I realize that time isn't supposed to be divided equally among the players, but Fort does substitute 5 new players every minute or so. Each player would receive over twelve minutes of playing time each game if each player got the same opportunity to play. Gus is still shooting 100% from the field after two games and snared a nice offensive rebound during this game. He has zero turnovers for the season thus far. Apparently, these statistics don't matter in the Fort offensive system.

### **Fort's Box Score:**

| <b>Name</b>         | <b>2 Pt Goals</b> | <b>3 Pt Goals</b> | <b>Free Throws</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Gio Armendariz Cruz | 5                 | 0                 | 1-4                | 11           |
| Bradley Hebb        | 0                 | 0                 | 0-0                | 0            |
| Jasigh Ransome      | 1                 | 0                 | 3-4                | 5            |
| Carter Fink         | 2                 | 0                 | 0-0                | 4            |
| Trey Miller         | 1                 | 0                 | 1-2                | 3            |
| Sam Garber          | 1                 | 7                 | 1-2                | 24           |
| Austin Metz         | 0                 | 1                 | 0-0                | 3            |
| Evan Braun          | 1                 | 0                 | 1-1                | 3            |
| Rhylan Martin       | 2                 | 0                 | 1-2                | 5            |
| Del Ray Jones       | 0                 | 2                 | 0-0                | 6            |
| Tripp Hanger        | 0                 | 3                 | 0-0                | 9            |
| Jalen Alexander     | 3                 | 0                 | 0-0                | 6            |
| Gus Gutshall        | 1                 | 0                 | 0-0                | 2            |
| Carter Berry        | 3                 | 0                 | 1-2                | 7            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>20</b>         | <b>13</b>         | <b>9-17</b>        | <b>88</b>    |

[https://www.dnronline.com/sports/high\\_school/ta-holds-off-indians-furious-second-half-comeback/article\\_0ce1bcbd-3a89-56ba-8551-7428aa01161c.html](https://www.dnronline.com/sports/high_school/ta-holds-off-indians-furious-second-half-comeback/article_0ce1bcbd-3a89-56ba-8551-7428aa01161c.html)

High School Boys Basketball

## TA Holds Off Indians' Furious Second-Half Comeback

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record

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Turner Ashby's Solomon Shifflett drives up the court against Fort Defiance's Carter Berry.

Daniel Lin / DN-R

**BRIDGEWATER** — The noise level inside Larry S. Pence Gymnasium was deafening, but most of it was coming from the visiting bleachers behind the Fort Defiance bench.



After senior forward Sam Garber drilled a 3-pointer — his seventh of the night — to give the Indians an 88-86 lead with 2:13 remaining, the momentum had completely shifted, and a young Turner Ashby squad featuring three freshmen suddenly found itself in a state of shock.

“When we got down, we called a timeout, and I told them, ‘How are we going to handle this?’” Knights head coach Clay Harris said. “We were facing adversity, and it’s the first time we’ve faced it, so how are we going to respond? I thought we came out, and we responded.”

TA closed the game on an 8-0 run, fueled by buckets from sophomore Solomon Shifflett and freshman Jayden Lacey, to defeat Fort 94-88 in a boys basketball thriller at home Thursday.

Shifflett tied the game out of the timeout before Lacey scored the go-ahead bucket with 1:35 remaining. Fort then missed a number of shots, including multiple attempts off offense rebounds, and Shifflett went 4-of-4 from the charity stripe to close out the impressive non-district win.

“Coach talks about handling adversity and coming past challenges as a group, and I felt like we really came together through teamwork and just found a way to win,” Lacey said.

Led by Lacey and fellow freshman Owen Laver, who both scored a team-high 22 points, the Knights outscored the Indians 29-6 in the second quarter to go into the half up 56-34.

But slowly, Fort chipped away at the lead with Garber heating up from deep, while sophomore point guard Gio Armendariz Cruz scored 10 of his 11 points in the second half as well.

After cutting the deficit to 12 by the end of the third, the Indians continued to grind away in the fourth before Garber eventually hit a trey from the left wing to give the Indians the lead.

“I’m proud of them for that second-half effort,” said first-year Fort head coach Mike Gale. “We dug a big hole there. We’re still learning. I’m just proud of them for continuing to battle until the final buzzer and to have a shot. That’s all you can ask for. Halftime didn’t look good. Give our guys a lot of credit for fighting. They’re trying to learn as much as possible, and they have a positive attitude. We came up a little short, but hopefully, this helps us in the long run.”



Garber's shot proved to be the last points for the Indians, who fell to 0-2 to start the season in their first year under Gale, who is installing The Grinnell System offense into the program.

Turner Ashby's Henry Riner goes up for a shot over Fort Defiance's Rhylan Martin.  
Daniel Lin / DN-R

Garber finished with a game-high 24 points for Fort, while sophomore Tripp Hanger had nine.

"We had a few days to prepare, and we went over it," said Harris, an FDHS alum in his second season at TA. "I told them, 'Guys, you know yourself, and you need to take a good shot for you and for the team. If a wide-open 3 is a good shot for you and for the team, take it. There in the third quarter, I wish we would've taken a bit more. But when you're hot, I was fine with it."

Outside of the big nights from Laver and Lacey, freshman Anthony Perez also brought a spark off the bench with nine points, while Shifflett finished with 12, junior Henry Riner added nine during a solid first-half showing, and sophomore wing Caden Simmers finished with eight.

"It was our first varsity game, and it was definitely a challenge, but we were just focused on handling adversity and playing together as a team," said Laver, who scored 17 of his 22 points in the first half for the Knights. "That's all we needed to pull it out. We just had to keep going and not let it get to our heads. We had to play through it and play as a team and we did that."

Turner Ashby (1-0) is back in action Monday at home against non-district opponent Fluvanna County, while Fort (0-2) will travel to non-district foe Rockbridge County (0-1) on Wednesday.

After momentum had shifted on Thursday, the young Knights easily could have folded.

Instead, we may have seen the first step the program is taking in growing up rather quickly.

"I think it was a great experience, and it really showed how our team rallied together," Harris said. "It took all 11 of us, and I'm super proud. We have a whole new team from last year, and our kids have bought in throughout the offseason. They put in a lot of time over the summer, and I am hoping it's going to pay off."

*Fort Defiance 26 6 32 24 — 88*

*Turner Ashby 25 29 22 18 — 94*

*FORT DEFIANCE (0-2) — G. Aremendariz Cruz 5 1-4 11, A. Ransome 1 3-4 5, C. Fink 2 0-0 4, T. Miller 1 1-2 3, S. Garber 8 1-4 24, A. Metz 1 0-0 3, E. Braun 1 1-2 3, R. Martin 2 1-4 5, D. Jones 2 0-0 6, T. Hanger 3 0-0 9, J. Alexander 3 0-0 6, G. Gutshall 1 0-0 2, C. Berry 3 2-2 8. Totals 33 10-22 88.*

*TURNER ASHBY (1-0) — O. Laver 8 4-6 22, J. Lacey 10 2-4 22, S. Shifflett 4 4-5 12, H. Riner 3 1-2 9, C. Simmers 2 3-4 8, J. Jeffrey 1 0-0 2, M. Moseley 5 0-2 10, A. Perez 4 1-2 9, B. Laver 0 0-0 0. Totals 37 15-25 94.*

*3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 13 (S. Garber 7, T. Hanger 3, D. Jones 2, A. Metz), Turner Ashby 5 (O. Laver 2, H. Riner 2, C. Simmers).*

**Cody Elliott**

Sports Editor

