

Fort's Late Rally Gives the Indians 1st Win over Rockbridge

Fort Defiance stormed back from a thirteen point deficit in the 2nd quarter to top the Rockbridge Wildcats 91 – 71 at Rockbridge on November 6. With 7:25 to go, Fort led by only 62 – 60 but over the remainder of the game they outscored the home team 29 – 11 to earn their first win of the season.

The first half was a repeat of the previous two games—FDHS fell behind due to missed shots and porous defense. But the Rockbridge team seemed to tire in the second half, scoring only 22 points after scorching the nets for 49 points in the first half. Fort, on the other hand, finally saw their three-point shots drop in the second half including three by Sam Garber in the 4th quarter spurt.

Rockbridge opened scoring with a 5 – 0 run. Fort couldn't find the range and didn't score in the first three minutes. Finally, Rhylan Martin hit a layup to make it 5 – 2. He then somehow got a banked three pointer to drop, tying the score. Jasigh Ransome hit a three pointer giving the Indians the lead at 8 – 5. After a Rockbridge duece, Jaylen Alexander scored in close on an assist from Gio Armendariz Cruz. Rockbridge hit another three then Sam, who was not a starter, dropped in the first of his seven three pointers. Bradley's drive gave the Indians a 15 – 10 lead. Rockbridge closed to 15 – 12 but Sam hit another three. FDHS went cold for the last minute of the quarter, scoring only two points on Evan Braun's jumper. Meanwhile, Rockbridge scored took a 25 – 20 lead including a layup at the buzzer.

To open the second quarter, Carter Fink scored in close then Rockbridge added five more to make it 30 – 22. Evan's three helped the Fort cause but the home team went up 35 – 25 with five minutes to go in the quarter. Sam drove for two but again RHS responded to go up 39 – 27. Gio's three pointer reduced the lead to nine then, after Carter Fink hit one of two free throws, the Wildcats got their largest lead of the night at 44 – 31 with 2:13 to go. Evan scored in close then Gio hit another three pointer but Rockbridge still lead by 46 – 36 with 1:30 to go. Again, Sam got hot, hitting two consecutive three pointers. Gio's drive got the Indians within two at 46 – 44 but Rockbridge hit a field goal and a foul shot to go up 49 – 44 at the break.

Fort got things rolling in the third quarter as the Wildcats seemed to wilt under the intense pressure by the Indians. Jasigh hit a three then Sam hit another three pointer with 6:16 to go, giving FD a 50 – 49 lead. Jasigh made another trey with 5:48 to go. The Wildcats tied the score at 53's before Gio's drive gave Fort the lead again. The two teams swapped the lead with Gio's drive tied the score at 57's. RHS made a free throw before Austin Metz slammed home a three pointer at the end of the quarter with Fort leading 60 – 58.

Fort's 31 point 4th quarter opened with Sam scoring a layup. Del Ray Jones bombed in a three pointer, then both Bradley Hebb and Tripp Hanger scored on drives giving Fort a 69 – 62 lead with 5:48 to go. Sam's jumper from the top of the key followed by another three-pointer from him from the side gave Fort a commanding 75 – 64 lead with 3:51 to go. Carter Fink got two on a put back and Jasigh hit one of two free throws to make it 78 – 64. Jalen rebounded Jasigh's missed foul shot and scored. He was fouled on the shot. He missed his free throw but got his own rebound and scored again to make it 82 – 64.

Rockbridge finally broke its cold spell with a three pointer but Sam hit yet another three-pointer to give Fort a 85 – 67 lead with 1:49 to go. Fort’s final scoring came from a put back by Carter Berry, two free throws by Sam, and two more by Del Ray. The final was 91 – 71.

Sam had his best night of the season, scoring 27 points including seven three pointers. Jasigh added 13 and Gio 12. Fort is now 1 -2 for the season.

Grandfather’s note: You’d think that I would have left the game happy that Fort had finally won a game. I was not. Gus did not play one second in the fourth quarter despite FD building up an insurmountable lead. The Indians led by 18 points with 1:29 to go yet he was not allowed to play. He played 44 seconds in the first quarter, 1:30 in the second, and 46 seconds in the third quarter. What possible justification did the coaches have to not play him in the 4th? I was furious and still am as I write this.

Fort’s Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	3	2	0-0	12
Bradley Hebb	2	0	0-0	4
Jasigh Ransome	0	4	1-2	13
Carter Fink	2	0	1-2	5
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	2	7	2-2	27
Austin Metz	0	1	0-0	3
Evan Braun	2	1	0-1	7
Rhylan Martin	1	1	0-0	5
Del Ray Jones	0	1	2-2	5
Tripp Hanger	1	0	0-0	2
Jalen Alexander	3	0	0-1	6
Gus Gutshall	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Berry	1	0	0-0	2
TOTAL	17	17	6-10	91

The article below is from the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball

Indians Run Away With First Win Of Season

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Dec 7, 2023

Last week following a difficult road loss to Turner Ashby — his team's second consecutive loss — Fort Defiance head coach Mike Gale preached the importance of his team staying patient.

After several practices, it seemed to pay off, as the Indians ran away with a 91-71 blowout of Rockbridge County in non-district boys basketball action in Lexington on Wednesday.

Senior forward Sam Garber had another massive night for Fort, hitting seven 3s and finishing with 27 points in the victory, while sophomore guard Jasigh Ransome finished with 13 points.

Gio Armendariz Cruz, another standout sophomore guard, added 12 points for the Indians, while sophomore forward Evan Braun totaled seven, and senior forward Jalen Alexander had six.

The Wildcats were led by junior forward Samuel Ballstaedt with 17 points, but it was a balanced effort, as senior forward Ian Johnson scored 14 and senior center Milo Mulitalo had 13.

Henry Lambert, a senior guard, also hit double digits with 11 points for Rockbridge in the loss.

Fort outscored the Wildcats by 25 in the second half to come away with a convincing victory.

The Indians (1-2) are right back on the hardwood Friday with a trip to non-district foe Broadway (3-1), while Rockbridge (0-3) will play at non-district opponent Alleghany that night.

Fort Defiance 22 22 16 31 — 91

Rockbridge County 25 24 9 13 — 71

Cody Elliott

Sports Editor