

Fort storms past Buffalo Gap 97 – 64, 4th Consecutive Win

Fort Defiance evened its season record at 6 – 6 by winning their fourth game in a row on January 12 in the Don Landes Gym. The 97 – 64 win over Buffalo Gap upped their Shenandoah District record to 3 – 0. Buffalo Gap fell to 6 – 8, 0 – 4 in the District. The Indians were led by sophomore Gio Armendariz Cruz who scored 27 points for the second consecutive game. Sam Garber added 14 and Carter Fink 13 for the home team.

Gap raced out to a 7 – 0 lead with 6:36 left in the opening quarter but once Fort started rolling the Indians dominated the Bison whose fine team from a year ago was decimated by graduation. Gio made two free throws then Jasigh Ransom made a three pointer. Gio's trey brought the Indians within four at 12 – 8 in favor of the Bison with 6:02 to go. After a Buffalo Gap field goal, Gio scored in the paint then Rhylan Martin tied the score at 14's on a nice feed from Bradley Hebb. Carter Fink made a three point play the old fashioned way to give the home team the lead at 17 – 14 at the 2:25 mark. Fort Defiance would not surrender the lead for the rest of the night. Gio's 11th point of the quarter made it 19 – 14. After a Gap free throw, Evan Braun hit a three pointer. Jasigh made one of two free throws before Gap hit a three to make it 23 – 18 in favor of FDHS. Bradley's two points in close gave Fort a 25 – 18 lead at the end of the quarter.

Fort extended their lead greatly in the second quarter. Carter Fink scored near the basket then Rhylan hit a three pointer. Del Ray Jones popped in a triple then it was Jasigh's turn as Fort raced to a 36 – 25 lead at the 5:02 mark. Gio got one of two free throws to drop then Jalen Alexander took a nice feed from Tripp Hanger and scored in the paint. Sam Garber, who had scored 37 in Fort's previous game, got his first basket with a three pointer with 3:52 to go in the quarter. Buffalo Gap knew he had to be stopped in order to beat Fort Defiance so he was closely guarded the entire night. After two more from Bradley, Sam scored in the lane to push Fort's lead to 46 – 29 with 2:33 to go. After a nice defensive blocked shot by Gus Gutshall, Trey Miller banged home a three pointer then Gio scored on a drive to make it 51 – 30. Gio got one of two free throws to go giving FDHS a 52 – 35 lead. As time expired in the quarter, Carter Fink slammed home a dunk to make the score Fort 54, Gap 35 at halftime. Fort was guilty of many fouls in the first half but Buffalo Gap shot poorly from the free throw line.

Fort extended the lead in the third quarter. After a Gap bucket, Gio scored on a drive then made two free throws. Bradley scored in the lane then Gio scored again on a drive to make it 62 – 39 with 4:37 to go in the quarter. Carter Fink took a nice pass from Tripp for an easy bucket then scored again in the paint to make the score 66 – 43. Gap closed to 66 – 47 before Sam hit a three pointer. Rhylan made his second three pointer of the game to push the lead to 72 – 49. Gio closed the scoring by driving into the lane and scoring on two consecutive possessions which left the score at 76 – 49 after three periods.

Sam's three pointer after a Gap bucket got the lead to 28 at 79 – 51 then Tripp bombed in two consecutive three pointers for the Indians, making it 85 – 56. After a Gap basket, Gio once again wiggled through the defense for a layup. Carter Fink added another put back for a score then Sam was fouled as he made a basket in the lane. His free throw made the score 92 – 60. By this

time, the clock ran non-stop for the remainder of the game. Austin Metz got a three pointer and Carter Berry finished Fort's scoring with a layup. Buffalo Gap scored at the buzzer making the final score Fort Defiance 97, Buffalo Gap 64.

Fort's four consecutive wins have come at the expense of teams which are down for 2023 – 24: Rockbridge, Riverheads, Waynesboro, and Buffalo Gap. The real test will be the next game for the Indians when they visit Staunton next week. Staunton is also undefeated in Shenandoah District play and should be a much tougher opponent.

Sam and Gio lead the Indian scoring at this point with 20.8 and 15.0 points per game, respectively. You would think that Sam, at 6'5", gets his points in the paint while Gio, a 6' 0" guard, scores mostly from the outside. The opposite is true. 66% of Sam's points this year have come on three pointers. 69% of Gio's points have come on two pointers, mostly on drives into the lane. Both have been known to take bad shots but Sam nonetheless is able to hit well from outside the three point line and Gio is frequently able to drive into the crowded lane and get his shot to fall.

Grandfather's note: Gus did get to play some in each quarter. He had a nice block on a Gap player's shot and got several rebounds. He continues to try hard on the court and I'm proud of him.

Fort's Box Score:

| Name | 2 Pt Goals | 3 Pt Goals | Free Throws | Total |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Gio Armendariz Cruz | 9 | 1 | 6-8 | 27 |
| Bradley Hebb | 3 | 0 | 0-0 | 6 |
| Jasigh Ransome | 0 | 2 | 1-4 | 7 |
| Carter Fink | 6 | 0 | 1-1 | 13 |
| Trey Miller | 0 | 1 | 0-0 | 3 |
| Sam Garber | 2 | 3 | 1-1 | 14 |
| Austin Metz | 0 | 1 | 0-0 | 3 |
| Evan Braun | 0 | 1 | 0-0 | 3 |
| Rhylan Martin | 1 | 2 | 0-0 | 8 |
| Del Ray Jones | 0 | 1 | 0-0 | 3 |
| Tripp Hanger | 0 | 2 | 0-0 | 6 |
| Jalen Alexander | 1 | 0 | 0-0 | 2 |
| Gus Gutshall | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | 0 |
| Carter Berry | 1 | 0 | 0-0 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 23 | 14 | 9-14 | 97 |