

Fort Defiance swats Hornets 90 - 69

The Fort Defiance Indians used an 11 – 0 run in the first quarter to take the lead which propelled them to a 90 – 69 win over the Wilson Memorial Hornets in the FDHS gym on January 23. The win evened Fort's record at 7 – 7 for the year, 4 – 1 in the Shenandoah District. Wilson dropped to 7 – 7, 3 – 3.

Wilson ran out to an 11 – 5 lead to open the game. Down 3 – 0, Carter Fink got things started for the Indians with a bucket on a nice pass from Del Ray Jones. After Wilson ran the lead to 9 – 2, Gio Armendariz Cruz scored on a drive and Jalen Alexander hit one of two free throws to make it 9 – 5. Wilson made two free throws then Fort narrowed the lead with two foul shots by Sam Garber and a basket by Austin Metz. Wilson scored the next four points to go up 15 – 9 but that was all the points the Hornets would get the rest of the quarter. Meanwhile, Fort got a free throw from Gio, a basket in the paint and a free throw by Carter Fink, a field goal in the lane by Sam, an old-fashioned three point play by Gio, and two more from Sam as time expired to give the home team a 20 – 15 lead at the end of the first period.

Trey Miller extended the lead to 22 – 15 to open the second period. Wilson then went on an 8 – 0 run of their own to take a 23 – 22 lead. However, a technical foul was called on the Hornets and Gio made both free throws to give FDHS the lead back at 24 – 23. After a foul shot by Sam made it 25 – 23, Carter F. brought the crowd to its feet with a dunk to give the Indians a four point lead. Wilson closed to 27 – 25 before Jasigh Ransome hit two free throws with 3:22 to go in the half. Sam tipped in a missed shot then hit another field goal in the lane to give Fort a 33 – 27 lead with 1:21 to go. He was fouled on the shot and made his free throw. Wilson then scored twice to get within three at 34 – 31 before Del Ray banged home a three pointer to make it 37 – 31. It would be the only three pointer the Indians made the entire half. A drive by Gio at the buzzer gave the Indians a 39 – 31 lead at halftime.

Wilson narrowed the lead to 39 – 33 to open the third quarter before Carter Fink again scored in close. Del Ray followed with his second triple of the game. Wilson answered with a three but Tripp Hanger followed with another three pointer for the home team, giving the Indians a 47 – 36 lead. Evan Braun hit a jumper to extend the lead to 49 – 36. After a Wilson field goal, Gus Gutshall was fouled after retrieving an offensive rebound. He swished both of his shots to make it 51 – 38. Rhylan Martin made a two pointer and the score stood at 53 – 40 with 3:30 to go in the quarter. Carter Fink added two short field goals to give FDHS a 57 – 42 advantage. Wilson scored the next four points before Sam got a layup to fall then Carter Fink scored again in the paint. Gio's drive with 8 seconds to go in the quarter left the Indians with a seemingly comfortable 63 – 48 lead at the end of the third.

The helter skelter offense that Fort plays means that no lead is ever safe. Sure enough, by the time three minutes had run off the clock in the fourth quarter Wilson had closed the gap to 66 – 61. Prior to that, all Fort could muster were foul shots by Jasigh and Gio. Fort finally put their foot on the pedal for the remainder of the game, scoring 24 points in the last five minutes, 20 of which were by Sam and Carter, to take a 90 – 69 victory.

Fort was again without the services of Bradley Hebb. Sam led Fort with 26 points while Carter had a personal high with 23. Gio scored 15. Twelve Indian players scored. Eli Irving scored 17 for the Hornets. Fort Defiance is back in action on Saturday with a game against Alleghany to be held at Rockbridge High School as part of the 10th annual Rock the Ribbon Roundball Shootout.

Grandfather's note: Again, Gus played much less than his teammates. He actually started the game but was in for only 42 seconds before being taken out. He played an average of two minutes in each of the first three quarters and did not play at all in the fourth. Yet, in his short time in the game, he still had six rebounds, no turnovers, was 2 – 2 from the free throw line and 0 – 1 from the field. Three of his rebounds were offensive.

A win, especially a District win, should be something to celebrate. It is certainly true that the Shenandoah District is having a lean year with the exception of Staunton. When I look back at this win, however, I don't remember good passes, skilled ball handling, smart coaching moves, appropriate shot taking, or alert defensive moves. What I recall are players desperate to shoot with no regard for their teammates, the clock, or the score. What a shame.

I am still puzzled about the team's warmup routine. All they do is to shoot three pointers. Each player shoots at least a dozen from beyond the arc. They shoot very few layups, no free throws, and do nothing to enhance their ball handling or passing skills. Tonight, for example, over 150 three point shots were practiced before the game. And how many were made in the game? One in the first half and three in the second. Meantime, they got 27 baskets in the lane and shot 30 free throws, but none of these were practiced in the warm-ups. I'm befuddled.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	5	0	5-7	15
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	1	0	4-4	6
Carter Fink	10	0	3-7	23
Trey Miller	1	0	0-0	2
Sam Garber	7	2	6-8	26
Austin Metz	1	0	0-0	2
Evan Braun	1	0	0-0	2
Rhylan Martin	1	0	0-0	2
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	0	1	0-0	3
Jalen Alexander	0	0	1-2	1
Gus Gutshall	0	0	2-2	2
Carter Berry	0	0	0-0	0
TOTAL	27	4	21-30	90

The following short article appeared in the Staunton NewsLeader:

Other Shenandoah District results

Sam Garber finished with 26 points while Carter Fink added 23 as **Fort Defiance** beat **Wilson Memorial** 90-69 Tuesday in boys basketball.

Fink had a big third quarter, scoring eight points to help Fort turn an eight-point halftime lead into a 15-point advantage. Wilson could never rally, in dropping its third straight game in the district in the last week and a half. Eli Irving led the Hornets with 17 points.

Fort has won five of six since Jan. 2 and has reached 90 points in all but one of those wins. Gio Armendariz Cruz finished with 15 points in the Fort win.

The following article appeared in the Harrisonburg NewsLeader:

High School Boys Basketball

Fort Rolls To Rout Of Green Hornets

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Jan 24, 2024

The senior duo of Sam Garber and Carter Fink combined for 48 points for Fort Defiance in a 90-69 Shenandoah District rout of Wilson Memorial on Tuesday.

Garber, a 6-foot-5 win who is having the best season of his career this year, finished with a game-high 25 points for the Indians, while the 6-foot-3 forward Fink chipped in with 23.

Gio Armendariz Cruz, a sophomore guard, also hit double digits for Fort with 15 points, while sophomore guard Jasigh Ransome and senior forward Dell Ray Jones finished with six apiece.

Eli Irving, a junior wing, led the way for the Green Hornets with 17 points in the setback, while freshman guard Mason McWhorter finished with 13 and junior guard Chase Snyder scored 12.

The Indians (7-7, 4-1 Shenandoah) have now won five of six and will play Alleghany in the Rock The Ribbon Roundball Shootout at Rockbridge County High on Saturday, while Wilson (7-7, 3-3 Valley) will aim to snap a three-game skid against Riverheads (4-12, 0-6 Shenandoah) on Friday.

Cody Elliott

Sports Editor