

Fort Defiance wears down Waynesboro 91 - 80

The Fort Defiance Indians got back on the winning track with a come-from-behind 91 – 80 win over the Waynesboro Little Giants on February 2 in the Don Landes Gym. Fort trailed by as much as ten points in the first half but went on a 9 – 0 run midway in the third quarter to take the lead for good. The win evens the Indians' record at 9 – 9, 6 – 2 in the Shenandoah District. Waynesboro fell to 2 – 16, 1 – 9.

Waynesboro took an early 6 – 0 lead before Sam Garber hit a three pointer for Fort's first points. Waynesboro responded with a three of their own then tacked on two jumpers for a 13 – 3 advantage before Gio Armendariz Cruz scored in the paint. After Waynesboro upped the lead to 15 – 5, Gio, not known for passing the ball, made a rare pass to Carter Fink for a deuce but Waynesboro quickly retaliated to go up 17 – 7. Sam's field goal made it 17 – 9 in favor of the Little Giants. They extended the lead to 18 – 9 before Trey Miller hammered in a three pointer. Gio hit one of two free throws with 36 seconds to go but Waynesboro got a field goal on an out-of-bounds play just as the buzzer sounded to take a 20 – 13 lead at the end of the quarter.

The second quarter found Fort able to catch up but they faded in the final minute and fell behind 37 – 35 at the half. Sam opened Fort's scoring in the quarter with a dunk. Waynesboro went up 22 – 15 then Fort got free throws by Jasigh Ransome and Carter F. plus a basket in the paint by Carter on a nice pass from Del Ray Jones to make it 22 – 19. At the 4:51 mark, Sam finally got the score tied with a three pointer from the top of the key. On the next possession, he made one of two free throws to give Fort its first lead of the night, 23 – 22. Waynesboro responded with two baskets and a free throw to retake the lead at 27 – 23. Gio then scored on consecutive drives to knot the score at 27's. Sam's two pointer then Carter Fink's free throw gave Fort a 30 – 27 lead with a little over two minutes to go in the quarter. Waynesboro scored but Gio, with 1:31 left, scored in the lane. His free throw on the next possession made it 33 – 29 but Waynesboro went on a 8 – 2 run in the final minute of the half to take a 37 – 35 lead. Fort's goal came in the last second on a shot by Carter F.

Fort's shooting was extremely poor, as it has been all season. From beyond the arc in the first half, they were 3 for 13. From the foul line they were 6 for 12. The only thing which kept them in the game was a tenacious defense which caused Waynesboro to turn the ball over several times, especially in the second half as the Little Giants tired. Waynesboro only had nine boys dressed for the game and they seemed to run out of steam in the second half.

The third quarter still started well for the visitors. Waynesboro jumped out to a 44 – 40 lead during the first half of the quarter. Fort's only goals came from Sam with a trey and Evan Braun's basket. After WHS extended their lead to 46 – 40, Fort went on a 9 – 0 run and took the lead for good. Gio started the run with consecutive drives. Rhylan Martin put the Indians ahead, 47 – 46 with a three pointer, then Carter F. scored with 2:07 to go to make it 49 – 46 in favor of the Indians. Waynesboro closed to 49 – 47 then Gus Gutshall got a free throw to drop. Waynesboro got within one at 50 – 49 then Sam hit a three pointer. Tripp Hanger's three pointer in the last few seconds of the quarter gave the home team a 56 – 51 lead after three periods.

Waynesboro was not able to get close in the fourth quarter. Gio played one against five for much of the quarter, scoring five baskets in the paint and hitting seven of eight free throws when he was fouled as Waynesboro tried to stop the clock. Other scores in the quarter were by Austin Metz with a three pointer, Carter F. with three buckets, Jasigh with a three, and Del Ray with two three pointers. It was a 35 point quarter for the Indians with Gio scoring 17 of them.

For the game he had 31, a season high for him. Sam added 19 and Carter 16. Zebulon Robinson scored 29 for the Little Giants.

Significant in the fourth quarter was Sam suffered a head injury on a drive with 6:52 to go. He did not return to the game.

Fort hit 11 three pointers in the game, eight in the second half. However, they had 33 attempts from beyond the arc.

Fort's next game is next Tuesday night at Buffalo Gap.

Grandfather's note: This was the eighteenth game of the season and I have the same complaints as I'd stated about the previous seventeen. It's hard to be too pleased with your team when they have to come from behind to defeat a 2 – 16 opponent. Gus played less tonight than he has in nearly every game. He played for one minute in the second quarter and zero minutes in the fourth. Another father was heard complaining tonight with the same exact comments that I wrote after the last game: the players are selfish and the boys do not play as a team. Today was Gus' 17th birthday; I wish it could have been more fun for him. I place the blame squarely on the FDHS coaches.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	11	0	9-12	31
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	0	1	1-2	4
Carter Fink	7	0	2-6	16
Trey Miller	0	1	0-0	3
Sam Garber	3	4	1-3	19
Austin Metz	0	1	0-0	3
Evan Braun	1	0	0-0	2
Rhylan Martin	0	1	0-0	3
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	0	1	0-0	3
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	0	0	1-2	1
Carter Berry	0	0	0-0	0
TOTAL	22	11	14-25	91

The following article appeared in the Daily News Record:

Cody Elliott

Sports Editor

High School Boys Basketball

Armendariz Cruz Pours In 31, Fort Wins

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record

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Led by standout sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz, a strong second half helped propel Fort Defiance to a 91-80 Shenandoah District boys basketball victory over Waynesboro inside Don Landes Gymnasium on Friday.

Armendariz Cruz, a 6-foot guard who had big moments as a freshman a year ago, is starting to find his footing in new head coach Mike Gale's system, putting up big scoring numbers over the past several games for the Indians.

Against the Little Giants, the sophomore finished with a game-high 31 points as Fort rallied from a halftime deficit to earn the hard-fought district win.

Senior forwards Sam Garber and Carter Fink also scored in double digits for the Indians, with Garber finishing with 17 points and Fink adding 16.

Dell Ray Jones, a senior forward, also chipped in with six points for Fort.

Although it was the fifth straight loss for the Little Giants, junior guard Zevion Robinson continued to be a bright spot with a team-best 29 points.

Sophomore forward Haden Morris added 18 points in the Waynesboro loss, while junior forward Jackson Darden finished with 15.

Sophomore guard Jonathan Vazquez also chipped in for the Little Giants with nine points, while classmate Isaiah Goldsmith finished with seven.

The Indians (9-9, 6-2 Shenandoah) return to action Tuesday at league opponent Buffalo Gap (9-10, 2-6 Shenandoah), while Waynesboro (2-17, 1-9 Shenandoah) hosts non-district foe East Rockingham (9-13, 5-7 Valley) on Monday.

Cody Elliott

Sports Editor