

## **Luray sends Fort Defiance packing, 80 - 67**

The Luray Bulldogs built up a 21 point lead at the half, extended it to 23 in the beginning of the third quarter, then held off a Fort Defiance rally to end the Indians' season, 80 – 67, at Fort Defiance in Region 2B quarterfinal action on February 20. They will play Madison County, top seeded in the tournament, on Friday in the Region semifinal.

The Bulldogs hopped on the Indians from the get-go, running out to a 8 – 0 lead in the first two minutes by beating the Fort press for easy layups. Carter Fink broke the drought with a dunk but LHS scored the next seven points to go up 15 – 2 with just under five minutes to go in the quarter. Sam Garber's three from the corner made it 15 – 5 but Luray answered to go up 18 – 5 before Carter Fink got a shot in the paint to go. Gio Armanderiz Cruz made a three point play on a drive plus a free throw after Luray had gone up 20 – 7 and Sam's put back narrowed the lead to 20 – 12. Luray went back up 22 – 12 then Gus Gutshall scored in the lane for the home team. Luray got the last three points of the quarter to possess a 25 – 14 lead after one.

Luray got a trey to open the second quarter but Del Ray Jones answered with one for the Indians making it 28 – 17. Luray upped their lead to 30 – 17 before Carter scored again in the paint. Luray got the next six points to increase their lead to 36 – 19 until Gio scored on a drive for Fort. Gus then came up with a loose ball and flipped it to Sam who dunked it to get the Fort crowd going with the score 36 – 23. Bradley Hebb's layup made it 36 – 25 but in the last three minutes all Fort could muster was a free throw by Bradley. Meanwhile, Luray went on an eleven point run to take a huge 47 – 26 lead at the half.

Fort's first half was as bad as it gets. They shot 2 for 22 from beyond the arc and got very few offensive rebounds. Gio was 2 for 12 from the field. Well-coached Luray passed through the Fort press with very few exceptions.

After Carter Fink's free throw opened the second half, Luray got its biggest lead of the night, 50 – 27, on a three pointer. Rhylan Martin answered with a three for FDHS, then Jasigh Ransome and Bradley scored on jumpers to narrow the lead to 50 – 34. Luray went back up 53 – 34 then Jalen Alexander scored on a put back. Tripp Hanger's three pointer made it 53 – 39. Gio got two on a drive with 1:58 to go and suddenly there was some hope on the Indian side. Luray went up 55 – 41 then Sam made a three to cut the lead to eleven at 55 – 44. However, the Bulldogs scored the next five points to take a 60 – 44 lead. Gio knocked down two free throws to get the Indians within fourteen at 60 – 46 at the end of the third quarter.

Tripp popped in a field goal then Sam scored on a put back after a Luray free throw to narrow the lead to 61 – 50. LHS then upped the lead to 63 – 50 before Evan Braun swished a three pointer at the 6:24 mark and Sam followed with a triple to cut the lead to just 63 – 56 with 6:11 to go. Luray went up 65 – 56 then Gio scored on a drive. After a Luray score, with 4:30 to go the visitors clung to a 67 – 58 lead. Jalen got two on a put back at the 4:17 mark but Luray answered to go up 69 – 60. Gio got two more as did the Bulldogs then Sam made another trey to cut the lead to 71 – 65 at the 3:15 mark.

This was the most crucial moment in the game. Fort had several chances to catch up during the next minute but couldn't get the ball to drop. Luray made four free throws to go up 75 – 65. Carter F. scored to make it 75 – 67 but those were the last points scored of the season by the Indians. Luray made it foul shots down the last 90 seconds to hold on for a 80 – 67 victory.

Blake Jenkins scored 29 for Luray and Christian Lentz tossed in 25. Sam led the Indians with 18 points. Gio was the only other player to score in double figures though neither of those two had a good shooting night. Gio took twenty five shots from the field during the game but made only five. As it has been all season, Fort's free throw shooting was abysmal tonight. The Indians made only 5 of 13 attempts. FDHS took over 40 three point shots during the game but made only eight.

Luray's record improved to 16 – 7. They finished third in the Bull Run District with a record of 11 – 5. Fort's final record was 11 – 12. They finished in a tie for second place in the Shenandoah District with Wilson Memorial and Stuarts Draft. Each of those teams ended with an 8 – 4 District record.

Grandfather's note: It is disappointing for the Fort team to end up with a losing record but even more disappointing that there was no improvement made in the undisciplined, self-centered Fort offense and porous defense throughout the season. The game clearly showed why the Grinnell System, adopted by the FDHS coaching staff all season, was a poor fit for the Indians. The system depends on making three point field goals; in the first half alone Fort was 2 – 22 from behind the three point line. The system depends on getting offensive rebounds and forcing turnovers, both of which were sparse tonight against a well coached Luray team. Any system played by a high school basketball team must teach defense; Fort gave up an average of 83 points per game this year. I'm glad that Gus stuck it out for the season despite the fact that he was underused and overlooked. The Grinnell system, "The System," is supposed to involve frequent platoon substitution. Tonight, Gus played a grand total of 45 seconds in the entire second half. Throughout the year he did a great job of quietly doing his part well when called on despite the infrequent number of times he was called. He put up with "The System" much better than I did.

**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	3-3	12
Bradley Hebb	2	0	1-2	5
Jasigh Ransome	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Fink	4	0	1-4	9
Trey Miller	0	0	0-2	0
Sam Garber	3	4	0-0	18
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	1	0-0	3
Rhylan Martin	0	1	0-0	3
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	1	1	0-2	5

Jalen Alexander	2	0	0-0	4
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	0	0	0-0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5-13</b>	<b>67</b>

The following article appeared in the Staunton News Leader:

SPORTS

# Grace Christian boys, girls win; Shenandoah District teams go 0-6: Tuesday sports roundup

*High school basketball*

**Patrick Hite**

Staunton News Leader



FORT DEFIANCE — **Fort Defiance** hit just one of its first 13 shot attempts Tuesday night, falling behind by 13 points in the first quarter on the way to a 80-

67 loss to Luray in the Region 2B boys basketball quarterfinals. Fort finishes its season 11-12.

"Give them credit," Fort coach Mike Gale said of Luray. "They came and attacked us from the get go. I am proud of our guys for battling to the end. We could have easily folded and called it a year, but we battled there. Just disappointed for the seniors."

Fort had five seniors on the roster.

Fort was down 21 at halftime but slowly — or, in the case of Fort Defiance and its chaotic style of play, not so slowly — got its deficit to single digits when Sam Garber hit a 3-pointer with 6:11 left in the fourth quarter. That bucket left Luray up 63-56.

The Luray lead yo-yoed between seven and nine the next three minutes before another Garber 3 made it a two possession game with Fort trailing by just six with 3:10 left. The region's No. 4-seed Fort could get no closer however in falling short of reaching the regional semifinals.

"We were lucky they didn't get hot in the first half and we had enough left in us to hang on for the victory," Luray coach Mat Huff said.

No. 5 Luray, led by Blake Jenkins' 29 points, plays top-seeded Madison in the semifinals.

Fort was led by Garber's 18 points and Gio Armendariz Cruz's 13 points.

Gale said he felt for his seniors, having to adjust to a new coach, new system, new culture in their final year of high school ball.

"That's always difficult," Gale said. "Give them credit for accepting a new coach and just trying the best they could. We had some guys who had great years for us."

The following article appeared in the Harrisonburg Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball: Region 2B Quarterfinals

# Bulldogs Run Past Fort, Advance To Semis

By MARK GRIFFIN For The Daily News-Record

Feb 21, 2024 Updated 23 hrs ago



Luray head coach Mat Huff talks with his team during a timeout.  
Daniel Lin / DN-R

**FORT DEFIANCE** — When a team faces Fort Defiance, it can expect two things.

The Indians are going to attempt a lot of 3-point goals and keep their foot on the pedal the entire way.

Fifth-seeded Luray came out of the gates strong in the first half and took advantage of fourth-seeded Fort Defiance's cold start to earn an 80-67 win in the Region 2B boys basketball quarterfinals Tuesday.

"We just tried to defend their 3-point shooters and take advantage of the layups as you can," Bulldogs head coach Mat Huff said. "We were fortunate that Fort got off to a cold start and we were able to build a lead."

In a contest that had the pace of a track meet, Luray junior guard Blake Jenkins was a thorn in the Indians' side all night, scoring 10 first-quarter points to set the tone for his team. The Bulldogs scored the game's first eight points and built a 20-7 lead after one period.

Jenkins scored 12 more in the second, including a pair of 3-point goals, and Christian Lentz added four as Luray extended its lead to 47-26 at the half.

The Indians were only able to connect on two 3-point goals in the first half with Gus Gutshall leading the way with six points.

Fort Defiance started to find its range in the third, hitting a trio of 3-pointers, to close the gap to 60-46 after three quarters of play.

The Indians hit three more treys in the fourth and cut the lead to seven, 63-56, at the 6:11 mark but could not get any closer as Luray hit 9-of-11 free throws down the stretch to seal the victory.

Jenkins finished with a career-high 29 points, including three 3-point goals.

"He had a big game tonight," said Huff. "If he goes, we go."

Lentz, a 6-foot-4 senior center, added 25 points for the Bulldogs.

"He's had some big games this year and he did a nice job in the middle," Huff said.

Senior Sam Garber paced the Indians with 18 while Gio Armendariz Cruz added 13.

"Give them credit as they were the better team tonight," first-year Fort head coach Mike Gale said. "I'm proud that our guys battled. We just didn't hit the shots or get the rebounds tonight."

The Indians finished 11-12 overall, while Luray improved to 16-7 and earned a trip to top seeded Madison County (19-7) on Friday in the region semifinals.

"We split with them in the regular season so we're excited to get another shot at them," Huff said.

**Luray 25 22 13 20 – 80**

**Fort Defiance 14 12 20 21 – 67**

**LURAY (16-7) – C. Lentz 10 5-8 25, B. Jenkins 11 4-4 29, M. Owens 2 4-4 8, C. Hilliard 3 6-10 12, R. Benson 1 0-0 2, B. Ansell 0 1-2 1, a. Haddock 1 1-2 3. Totals 28 21-30 80.**

**FORT DEFIANCE (11-12) – G. Armendariz Cruz 5 3-3 13, C. Fink 4 1-4 9, E. Braun 1 0-0 3, S. Garber 7 0-0 18, G. Gutshall 1 0-0 2, D. Jones 1 0-0 3, B. Hebb 2 1-2 5, R. Martin 1 0-0 3, J. Ransome 1 0-0 2, T. Miller 0 0-2 0, J. Alexander 2 0-0 4, T. Hanger 2 0-2 5. Totals 27 5-13 67.**

**3-Point Goals – Luray 3 (B. Jenkins), Fort Defiance 9 (S. Garber 4, R. Martin, E. Braun, D. Jones, T. Hanger).**