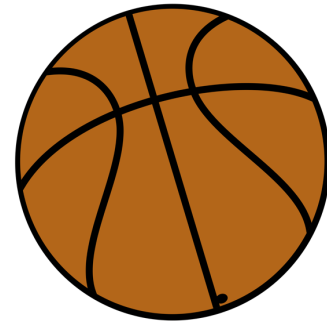


Gus Gutshall



Varsity Boys Basketball

2023 - 2024



**FORT DEFIANCE HIGH SCHOOL
INDIANS BASKETBALL 23-24**

Fort Defiance High School Boys Varsity Basketball 2023 – 2024 Roster



Roster
Fort Defiance Basketball - Boys Varsity

Number	Name	Position	Height	Year
1	Armendariz Cruz, Gio	G	6'0"	10
2	Hebb, Bradley	G	5'10"	11
3	Ransome, Allen	G	5'8"	10
4	Fink, Carter	F	6'3"	12
5	Miller, Trey	G	5'9"	11
10	Garber, Samuel	F	6'5"	12
12	Metz, Austin	F	5'9"	12
14	Braun, Evan	F	6'0"	10
20	Martin, Rhylan	F	5'10"	11
22	Jones, Dell Ray	F	5'10"	12
24	Hanger, Tripp	G	6'1"	10
32	Alexander, Jalen	F	5'11"	12
40	Gutshall, Gus	F	6'2"	11
44	Berry, Carter	F	6'0"	11

School Colors: Royal Blue and White

Head Coach: Mike Gale

Assistant Coach: Jeff Templeton, Jeff Blalock

Athletic Trainer: Jackson Roper

Mascot(s): Indians

Fort Defiance School Administration:

Superintendent: Dr. Eric Bond

Principal: Alan Shull Asst. or Associate Principals: Mark Mace, Serena Campbell

Athletic Director: Richard A. Miller



Gus was chosen for the All-Academic Team at the Route 53 Holiday Hoops Classic

Preseason Predictions

High School Boys Basketball

Shenandoah District Boys Basketball Preview: Storm Lead The Way In Wide-Open League

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Dec 19, 2023



1 of 2



Fort Defiance's Samuel Garber goes up for a shot against Broadway's Jet Gonzalez.

The Shenandoah District may be one of the area's most competitive this season.

Staunton, of course, is strong again after a run to the Virginia High School League Class 3 state quarterfinals a year ago, but Wilson Memorial, Stuarts Draft, and Fort Defiance are all strong.

The Storm were picked as the favorite in the Daily News-Record Preseason Coaches Poll, but were followed by the Hornets, Cougars, Indians, Buffalo Gap, Riverheads, and Waynesboro.

Led by senior guard Manny Chapman, who is one of the best players in the league and has an abundance of experience, Staunton will use its speed and athleticism to wear down teams.

But Wilson has shown the ability to get up and go early on this season as well. Draft has an athletic bunch looking to make the jump, and Fort's new system thrives on chaos.

Even at the bottom half of the predicted league standings, teams like Buffalo Gap and Riverheads are showcasing growth, and the Little Giants have some young talent.

The Shenandoah District slate was set to get going on Tuesday, and it could be a year to remember, with over half of the league looking capable of making a postseason push.

As league play officially gets underway, here's a preview of the Shenandoah District:

Fort Defiance

Coach: Mike Gale (first season)

2022-23 Record: 14-10 (Lost to Spotswood in Region 3C quarterfinals)

Key Returners: Sam Garber, senior, forward (10.3 ppg, 5.6 rpg); Gio Armendariz Cruz, sophomore, guard (3.7 ppg, 2.6 rpg); Bradley Hebb, junior, guard

Key Losses: Tyreek Veney, guard (17.2 ppg, 4.0 rpg, 2.0 apg); Henry Gutshall, forward (8.5 ppg, 5.6 rpg); Kaden Johnson, guard (3.1 ppg, 3.0 rpg, 2.0 apg)

Key Newcomers: Trey Miller, junior, guard; Evan Braun, sophomore, forward; Tripp Hanger, sophomore, guard; Jasigh Ransome, sophomore, guard; Carter Berry, junior, forward

Outlook: It's a new year and a new system for Fort Defiance, but hope is high.

The Indians are learning first-year head coach Mike Gale's system still, but progress is there.

Led by standout senior forward Sam Garber and sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz, there's no doubt talent is there for Fort Defiance to compete with some of the league's best teams.

As the Indians get more comfortable, expect more wins to occur for this program.

Gale Says: "We expect to be playing our best basketball by the end of the season. It is going to take some time for our guys to make the adjustments to our system but I am pleased with what I have seen so far. They have a positive attitude and have been working hard in the preseason. This is going to be a fun year for all of us."

Fort Defiance High School

Boys Varsity Basketball

2023 – 2024 Schedule and Results

Basketball Boys – Varsity
School Year: 2023 - 2024

Date	Opponent	Location	Score	W/L
	East			
11/21/23	Rockingham (Scrimmage)	Fort Defiance High School		
11/25/23	Luray (Scrimmage)	Fort Defiance High School		
11/28/23	Broadway	Fort Defiance High School	73 – 88	L
11/30/23	Turner Ashby	Turner Ashby High School	88 – 94	L
12/6/23	Rockbridge County	Rockbridge County High School	91 – 71	W
12/8/23	Broadway	Broadway High School	83 – 108	L
12/12/23	Turner Ashby	Fort Defiance High School	89 – 87	W
12/14/23	Alleghany	Fort Defiance High School	56 – 83	L
12/21/23	Monticello	Fluvanna County High School	62 – 77	L
12/23/23	Fluvanna County	Monticello High School	86 – 102	L
1/2/24	Rockbridge County	Fort Defiance High School	81 – 48	W
1/5/24	Riverheads	Fort Defiance High School	108 – 82	W
1/10/24	Waynesboro	Waynesboro High School	105 – 95	W
1/12/24	Buffalo Gap	Fort Defiance High School	97 – 64	W
1/18/24	Staunton	Staunton High School	80 – 106	L
1/23/24	Wilson Memorial	Fort Defiance High School	90 – 69	W
1/27/24	Alleghany	Rockbridge County High School	65 – 88	L
1/30/24	Riverheads	Riverheads High School	86 – 64	W
2/1/24	Stuarts Draft	Fort Defiance High School	68 – 86	L
2/2/24	Waynesboro	Fort Defiance High School	91 – 80	W
2/6/24	Buffalo Gap	Buffalo Gap High School	94 – 70	W
2/9/24	Staunton	Fort Defiance High School	74 – 100	L
2/12/24	Stuarts Draft	Stuarts Draft High School	67 – 65	W
2/14/24	Wilson Memorial	Wilson Memorial High School	91 – 97	L
2/20/24	Luray — Region B2 Quarterfinal	Fort Defiance High School	67- 80	L
			Overall	Shenandoah District
		Season Record	11-12	8-4



Scrimmage: East Rockingham 92, Fort Defiance

East Rockingham beats the new Fort Defiance Indians 92 - 73 in season-opening scrimmage

by Joe Hill

Things are new at Fort Defiance High School for 2023-24: new team, new coach, and new offensive and defensive systems. The team features return players Gio Armendariz Cruz, Bradley Hebb, Carter Fink, Del Ray Jones, Austin Metz, Jalen Alexander, and All-District player Sam Garber. Newcomers to the team are Jasigh Ransome, Trey Miller, Evan Braun, Rhyland Martin, Tripp Hanger, Gus Gutshall, and Carter Berry. Mike Gale has taken over as coach, replacing Brandon Fulk. And with a new coach, there comes a new system of basketball which the boys are trying to adjust to.

Coach Gale's system includes rapid platooning of players, usually five at a time, after only a couple of minutes of play. In the opening scrimmage, all fourteen players had seen action in the first 1:30 of play in the first quarter against East Rockingham. Gale's strategy includes full court pressing on defense and rapidly launching of three point shots on offense.

It is fair to say that this system of play did not work well in the first scrimmage of the year. Many, many times East Rockingham beat the Fort press and got easy buckets from the resulting 3-on-1 or 2-on-1 matchups. Not only was the defense unable to get points off the press, it resulted in many fouls called against the struggling Indians. Fort's shooting of three pointers was abysmal. In the second and third quarters, Sam was the only Indian to connect on a triple. The misfires were often and spread among a variety of players.

Gio opened play with a deuce from a drive on the basket, giving the Indians a 2 - 0 lead. After a series of misses by FDHS, East Rockingham evened the score at 2 before Tripp Hanger bombed in a three pointer. ERHS quickly tied the game at 5's on a three point play then added a two pointer to go up 7 - 5. Rylan hit his first three pointer to give FDHS the lead at 8 - 7. FDHS then missed several more three point attempts but ERHS did not and took the lead 10 - 8. Jasigh evened things on a nice drive but ERHS responded with a triple to go up 13 - 10 with 3:25 to go in the quarter. Carter Fink then picked up two consecutive baskets in the lane to give FD a 14 - 13 lead. Bradley scored on a drive before ERHS added a free throw to make the score 16 - 14. ERHS added another free throw before Sam banged in a three pointer to give FDHS a 19 - 15 lead. ERHS was shooting one-and-one free throws before the end of the quarter due to excessive Fort fouls. They hit two to make the score 19 - 17. Gio made one of two free throws to give FDHS its last lead of the quarter at 20 - 17. In the last minute, ERHS hit a three pointer and a field goal to give them the 22 - 20 advantage at the quarter. During the last few seconds of the quarter FDHS again missed multiple three point attempts. Throughout the quarter, Gale substituted 5 new players approximately every minute of action.

Since this was a scrimmage, the score clock was reset each quarter. The second quarter was disastrous for FDHS. ERHS repeatedly beat the Fort press for easy buckets. Meanwhile, Fort's shooting remained poor. Sam finally got a three pointer at the buzzer but it was the only trey of the quarter for FDHS. Bradley scored on two consecutive drives early in the quarter. Gio had two of four three throws, Rhyland made a field goal, and Sam added a field goal before his

buzzer-beating three. But these 13 points were pale in comparison to the 30 ERHS put up. The platoon system was again used unsuccessfully.

The third quarter was somewhat better for Fort. They ended up winning it, 22 - 21. Baskets were made by Jalen, Sam, and Del Ray early on. Austin got two on a put-back and Gio scored on a drive. Fort fell behind 16 - 10 with 2:29 to go but Sam got a three pointer to fall then added a dunk to make it 18 - 15. Bradley scored on a drive then hit three of four three throws. Jalen added a field goal as Fort eked out the 22 - 21 quarter advantage.

The fourth quarter was evenly matched. Carter B. made one of two free throws to open Fort's scoring. Rhylan hit a three pointer and Bradley got a layup. Sam hammered home another three pointer as did Gio. Carter Fink scored in close and Del Ray hit both of his free throws to give FDHS a 16 - 14 advantage. After ERHS scored five consecutive points, Gio was fouled shooting a three pointer as time expired. He hit his first two but missed the third, making the score ERHS 19, Fort 18 for this quarter.

A fifth quarter was played. Gus, who had not played since early in the second quarter, got back in and scored two after an offensive rebound. Tripp added two field goals before Austin got a three to go, tying the score at 9 - 9. Fort fell behind 15 - 9 before Carter Fink scored on a three pointer with three minutes to go. Rhylan then ended the day with two consecutive three pointers. For the quarter, despite the platooning of players, ERHS was able to score at will and won the quarter 22 - 18.

The score for the first four quarters was East Rockingham 92, Fort Defiance 73. Sam led the Indians with 18 points in the five quarters. Rhylan scored 14, Bradley 13, and Gio 12.

Fort's Box Score (five quarters):

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	2	1	5-9	12
Bradley Hebb	5	0	3-4	13
Jasigh Ransome	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Fink	3	1	0-0	9
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	3	4	0-0	18
Austin Metz	1	1	0-0	5
Evan Braun	0	0	0-0	0
Rhylan Martin	1	4	0-0	14
Del Ray Jones	1	0	2-2	4
Tripp Hanger	2	1	0-0	7
Jalen Alexander	2	0	0-0	4
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	0	0	1-2	1
TOTAL	22	12	11-17	91

Game #1: Broadway 88, Fort Defiance 73

Broadway Bests Fort Defiance 88 - 73 in Season Opener

by Joe Hill

Broadway had little trouble overcoming the new Fort Defiance offense and defense systems with a 88 - 73 beat down of the Indians on November 28 in the Don Landes gym. Fort's inability to shoot well was a big factor in the loss. Fort's three point shooting, an important part of the new offense Coach Mike Gale has installed, was terrible. If FDHS had simply made its free throws it would have won the game but they missed 18 shots from the charity stripe in a foul-filled game. Plus, well-coached BHS adjusted to Fort Defiance's helter-skelter pressing defense and got numerous easy baskets, dooming the season opener for the home team playing in front of a very sparse crowd.

Broadway outshot the Indians, opening up the game with two treys to take a 6 - 0 lead before Bradley Hebb hit two free throws with 6:33 to go. Jasigh Ransom made one of two foul shots to pull FD within three but BHS made two free throws to go up 8 - 3. Gus Gutshall then made a nifty move into the lane and flipped up a pretty one-hander to get the Indians within three. BHS took a 11 - 5 lead before Sam Garber hit a field goal. After a BHS free throw, Sam hit a three pointer to make the score 12 - 10 in favor of the visitors. Carter Fink then picked up a Bradley miss and put it in to knot the score with 2:20 to go. BHS took a two point lead before Sam hit another field goal. FDHS took its first lead, 15 - 14, when Carter Berry made one of two foul shots. BHS quickly retook the lead 16 - 15 but Evan Braun made one of two foul shots to tie the score. Austin Metz then popped in a three pointer with 9.7 seconds to go to push Fort's lead to 19 - 16. Broadway closed with quarter with a free throw, leaving it 19 - 17 after one period.

During the period, Coach Gale rapidly platooned five new players every minute or so. All players, except for Gio Armendariz Cruz who was still nursing a concussion injury, saw action and eight scored led by Sam's seven points in the quarter.

The second quarter was the beginning of the downfall for the home team. Initially Fort maintained its lead as Sam made another field goal and hit two free throws. Meanwhile, Broadway ran up a 35 - 23 lead with 4:35 to go in the quarter before Del Ray Jones finally got Fort going with a three pointer. Sam made two more free throws and Carter Fink scored again in the paint. Both Trey Miller and Evan completed a three point plays after snaring offensive rebounds but Broadway kept its lead at 45 - 36 at the half.

During the half, many of the Indians launched three point attempts but only three went in. Also worrisome at this point was that Sam picked up his third personal foul with 58 seconds remaining.

Broadway extended its lead to 13 by the end of the third quarter including a basket on an out-of-bounds play with 0.4 seconds on the clock. Fort's scoring for the quarter included two pointers by Jalen Alexander, two driving layups by Jasigh, a put-back by Evan, a three pointer from Jasigh, a layup by Carter Berry, and another three pointer from Sam.

FORT DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

Fort's fourth quarter was marred with poor free throw shooting. In this quarter alone the Indians missed ten foul shots. Broadway quickly opened up its largest lead of the night at 69 - 52 before Bradley made two free throws. Carter Fink made one of two free throws, then Jasigh and Carter Berry got two pointers to drop. Carter added two foul shots to make the score 73 - 61. Carter Fink added a foul shot then Sam and Carter each scored in close to make it 79 - 66 with 3:17 to go. Jasigh scored on a drive then hit a trey but the closest Fort got was 82 - 71 with 2:05 left in the game. Fort's last point was scored by Jalen on a foul shot. The final score was BHS 88, FDHS 73.

Tristan Yoder led Broadway with 23 points. For the game, Fort shot only 51% from the free throw line.

Grandfather notes: Coach Gale's platooning system runs many players in and out of the game but not all play the same amount. Gus only saw a total of three minutes of action during the game including zero in the fourth quarter. I am puzzled as to why this happened. If his teammates had been playing well perhaps I could understand it more. But those on the court had many, many turnovers, fouls, missed shots, and played a defense so porous that a mediocre Broadway team was able to score 88 points. In Gus' short time on the court he was one for one in shooting and had zero turnovers. Even the WHSV video which showed highlights of the game included Gus' field goal.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	0	0	0-0	0
Bradley Hebb	0	0	2-4	2
Jasigh Ransome	4	2	3-4	17
Carter Fink	3	0	2-5	8
Trey Miller	1	0	1-1	3
Sam Garber	4	2	4-6	18
Austin Metz	0	1	0-0	3
Evan Braun	2	0	2-7	6
Rhylan Martin	0	0	0-0	0
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	0	0	0-0	0
Jalen Alexander	1	0	2-6	4
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	2	0	3-4	7
TOTAL	18	6	19-37	73

The Daily News Record had the following article about the game:

High School Roundup

Yoder Helps Guide Gobblers To Victory Over Fort In Opener

DN-R Sports Desk

Fresh off an all-state showing during the fall cross country season, Broadway junior Tristan Yoder quickly got to work on the hardwood on Tuesday in a season-opening road victory.

The 6-foot guard poured in 22 points, grabbed nine boards, and dished out four assists as the Gobblers ran past Fort Defiance 88-73 in boys basketball action at Don Landes Gymnasium.

Junior forward Braden Burkhalter scored 18 points on an efficient 9-of-11 shooting performance for Broadway, which outscored the Indians by 15 over the second and third quarters combined.

Senior guard Conner Michael, a multi-sport standout for the Gobblers, was solid running the show with 15 points, eight rebounds, and four assists, while senior forward Jet Gonzalez built off a breakout junior campaign by debuting with 14 points, seven boards, and four assists as well.

Sophomore guard Victor Diaz-Hernandez had nine points and seven rebounds for Broadway.

For the Indians, who are in their first season under head coach Mike Gale, a FDHS Hall of Famer who most recently coached the girls team and is known for his chaotic offensive style termed "The Grinnell System," they struggled to get going from deep, hitting just 6 of 37 trey attempts.

Despite the loss, there were some bright spots as senior forward Sam Garber finished with 15 points and seven rebounds, while sophomore guard Allen Ransome also debuted with 15 points.

Senior forward Carter Fink was solid with eight points and four rebounds for Fort, while junior forward Carter Berry scored seven points, and senior for-



Daniel Lin / DN-R

Broadway head coach Dwight Walton yells to his team.

ward Dell Ray Jones had 11 rebounds.

Both teams are back in action this week as the Indians (0-1) will travel to Bridgewater on Thursday to take on Turner Ashby, which is coming off an extended postseason run with its football team, in a boys-girls varsity double-header inside Larry S. Pence Gymnasium, while the Gobblers (1-0) will host Monticello in the annual Broadway Tip-Off Classic on Friday.

Broadway 17 28 20 23 — 88
Fort Defiance 10 17 19 21 — 73
BROADWAY (1-0) — E. Post 1-2 0-0 2, V. Diaz-Hernandez 3-6 2-4 9, S. Post 0-10 4-8 4, J. Gonzalez 4-0 6-6 14, C. Michael 5-9 2-2 15, B. Ray 2-7 0-0 4, T. Yoder 9-24 1-8 22, B. Burkhalter 9-11 0-0 18. Totals 33-78 17-23 88.

FORT DEFIANCE (0-1) — B. Hebb 0-8 4-6 4, A. Ransome 6-12 1-2 15, C. Fink 3-4 2-5 8, T. Miller 1-5 1-3 3, S. Garber 5-13 4-6 15, A. Metz 2-5 0-0 6, E. Braun 2-8 2-7 6, R. Martin 0-2 0-0 0, D. Jones 1-4 0-0 3, T. Hanger 0-10 0-0 0, J. Alexander 1-2 2-4 4, G. Gutshall 1-4 0-2 2, C. Berry 2-3 3-4 7. Totals 24-75 19-37 73.

3-Point Goals — Broadway 5-24 (C. Michael 3-3, T. Yoder 1-8, V. Diaz-Hernandez 1-2, S. Post 0-7, J. Gonzalez 0-2, B. Ray 0-2). Fort Defiance 6-37 (A. Metz 2-5, A. Ransome 2-4, S. Garber 1-6, D. Jones 1-3, T. Hanger 0-9, T. Miller 0-4, E. Braun 0-3, B. Hebb 0-2, C. Fink 0-1). Rebounds — Broadway 55 (T. Yoder 9), Fort Defiance 48 (D. Jones 11). Assists — Broadway 22 (S. Post 7), Fort Defiance 9 (B. Hebb 4). Turnovers — Broadway 21, Fort Defiance 20.

ward points in the setback for the Rams.

Strasburg (0-1) returns to action on Dec. 5 for its home opener against Sherando.

Girls Basketball

East Rockingham 57, Luray 39: Senior standout guard Lauren "LT" Townsend opened her senior year in emphatic fashion, pouring in a team-high 15 points to lead a well-balanced East Rockingham effort in a non-district rivalry home win over Luray to open up the season.

Sydney Short, a freshman, was the only other player to hit double digits in the scoring column for the Eagles with 10 points, while classmate Maya Ramirez was also solid with eight.

Sophomore Izzy Knorr, junior Reagan Sipe, and freshman Kelsey Hatton added five points apiece for East Rockingham, which put 10 total players in the scoring column in the win.

For the Bulldogs, senior guard Maggie Foltz finished with a team-high nine points, while senior Emily Donovan and sophomore Ella Parlett, both guards, finished with seven points apiece.

The Eagles (1-0) return to the hardwood on Thursday for a non-district matchup at Page County (0-1), while

Luray (0-2) will play host to Broadway (1-0) in a non-district battle on Friday.

Luray 6 6 18 9 — 39
East Rockingham 13 10 17 17 — 57
LURAY (0-2) — M. Foltz 3-2 3-9, C. Goehner 0 0-0 0, M. Moore 1 0-0 3, L. Parlett 1 1-2 4, E. Parlett 2 1-3 7, R. Auger 2 1-5 5, A. Couper 1 0-0 2, E. Donovan 2 3-3 7, J. Parlett 1 0-0 2. Totals 14 8-13 39.

EAST ROCKINGHAM (1-0) — I. Knorr 2 0-0 5, R. Sipe 2 0-0 5, S. Short 4 2-5 10, K. Hatton 2 0-2 5, L. Campbell 1 1-4 3, C. Eppard 1 2-6 4, H. Lucas 0 1-2 1, K. Voight 0 0-0 0, L. Townsend 6 2-4 15, M. Ramirez 1 5-6 8, M. Darcus 0 1-2 1. Totals 19 14-30 57.

3-Point Goals — Luray 3 (M. Foltz, M. Moore, L. Parlett), East Rockingham 5 (I. Knorr, R. Sipe, K. Hatton, L. Townsend, M. Ramirez).

Broadway 51, Fort Defiance 48: Junior wing Wren Wheeler erupted with a double-double of 20 points and 14 rebounds in Broadway's season-opening home victory over Fort Defiance.

Wheeler was 10-of-16 from the charity stripe and had a pair of 3-pointers in the big win for the Gobblers, while senior wing Maya Bacon was solid as well with 11 points and four boards.

April Gingerich, a talented sophomore guard, finished with eight points for Broadway, while sophomore forward Hannah Tinnell scored five, and freshman Mady Ennis added four.

As for the Indians, they were led by standout senior guard Trinity Hedrick with 20 points.

Sophomore guard Jayden Hostetter scored 10 points for Fort, while Mia Alexander, a senior

guard, added eight points, and Calleigh Wilkerson, a junior center, finished with seven.

The Gobblers (1-0) will hit the road Friday for a non-district contest at winless Luray (0-2), while the Indians (0-1) travel to Turner Ashby (1-0) on Thursday for a non-district battle.

Fort Defiance 5 3 26 14 — 48
Broadway 16 13 6 16 — 51
FORT DEFIANCE (0-1) — C. Cruz 1 0-0 3, T. Hedrick 8 1-5 20, J. Hostetter 3 3-8 10, M. Alexander 4 0-0 8, M. Frz-zelle 0 0-2 0, C. Wilkerson 3 1-4 7. Totals 19 5-19 48.

BROADWAY (1-0) — K. Runion 1 0-0 2, W. Wheeler 4 10-16 20, H. Tinnell 2 1-1 5, A. Gingerich 3 2-2 8, E. Yoder 0 0-0 0, M. Bacon 2 7-10 11, M. Ennis 1 2 2 4, A. Shannock 0 0-0 0, L. Dingus 0 1-2 1. Totals 13 23-33 51.

3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 5 (T. Hedrick 3, C. Cruz, J. Hostetter), Broadway 2 (W. Wheeler).

Central 61, James Wood 46: Senior forward Makenna Painter erupted for a monster double-double of 25 points and 24 boards in a season-opening victory at James Wood.

Sophomore wing Kynli Hoover was the only other player in double digits for the Falcons with 11 points, while senior forward Peyton DiNardo added four points and a team-high 11 boards.

Central junior Aamori Williams and sophomore guard Vanessa Gordon added seven points each.

The Falcons (0-1) will return to action on Thursday at non-district opponent Stuarts Draft.

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Game #2: Turner Ashby 94, Fort Defiance 88

Turner Ashby Tops Cold Shooting Fort Defiance 94 - 88

by Joe Hill

Turner Ashby withstood a nice comeback from Fort Defiance and beat the visiting Indians 94 – 88 on November 30 at Turner Ashby High School. Fort roared back from being down by 22 at the half to take the lead late in the fourth quarter. The Indians lead 88 – 86 with 2:13 to go but then missed their last ten shots from the field and committed three turnovers to hand the victory to the Knights.

The first quarter was competitive. Tripp Hanger opened scoring with a 3 pointer. Gio Armendariz Cruz added one of two free throws but then the Knights sprinted to a 11 – 4 lead. TA benefited from excessive fouls called on the Indians; they were shooting bonus free throws with 4:52 left to go in the quarter. Sam Garber’s three pointer helped Fort claw back as did Rhylan Martin’s field goal. A second three by Sam gave Fort a 12 – 11 lead with 3:58 to go. After the home team had taken a 15 – 12 lead, Evan Braun completed a three-point play with a foul shot after a drive to knot the score at 15’s with 3:09 to go. During the last three minutes of the quarter, Fort got a free throw from Jasigh Ransome, another three pointer from Tripp, a third trey from Sam, and a field goal each from Carter Fink and Carter Berry to give the Indians a 26 – 25 lead after one quarter.

The second quarter was disastrous for FDHS. During the quarter, Fort made only 2 of 28 field goal attempts including 0 – 14 from the three-point zone. Gio got a put back to fall and Jalen Alexander added a field goal with 1:44 to go. The only other points were free throws by Sam and Trey Miller. At the half, TA boasted a 54 – 32 lead.

Fort began its comeback in the third quarter. Gio made two layups, Jasigh scored on a drive, Rhylan made one of two free throws, then Sam hit two threes and a field goal. Gus Gutshall then took a nice pass from Gio and scored in close. Tripp added a three pointer but FD still trailed 68 – 52 at the 2:12 mark. Del Ray Jones made a three, then Carter Berry made a nice reverse layup to get FDHS within 13 at 70 – 57. Carter made one of two free throws, Trey added two points after an offensive rebound, Jalen scored in close, and Gio scored on a drive to get the score to 76 – 64 at the end of the third.

Fort had a fine fourth quarter for the first six minutes. Sam hit a three pointer, Jalen scored two on a put back, Jasigh hit two free throws, and Carter Fink tipped in a missed shot to make it 80 – 73 with 6:39 to go. Gio got a jumper to fall after an offensive rebound, Rhylan hit a fade-away in the lane, and Carter Berry scored on an out of bounds play to make it 80 – 79. TAHS went up 82 – 79 then Austin Metz hit a three pointer to knot the score at 82’s with 4:04 left. TAHS surged to go up 86 – 82 then Del Ray hit a three pointer to get Fort within one point at the 3:16 mark. Sam then brought the Fort fans to their feet with a three pointer with 2:13 to go giving the Indians a 88 - 86 lead.

This is where the train wrecked for Fort. Over the final 2:13 they could not get the ball in the basket and committed three turnovers. Meanwhile, Turner Ashby made two field goals and four foul shots to take the 94 – 88 win.

Fort's shooting has been abhorrent. It is hard to fathom that they took 106 shots from the field during this game. They did but they missed 74 of those shots. Their field goal shooting percentage for the night was 30% after shooting just 32% in their loss against Broadway Tuesday night. At one point against Turner Ashby, the Indians missed sixteen consecutive three point shots. Free shooting is also problematic for the Indians. Tonight they made only 9 of 17 shots; for the season they are only making 52% of their foul shots. Against the Knights the Indians did a good job causing turnovers and rebounding but they were unable to turn possessions into points. All thirteen players for Fort who played scored with Sam leading the way with 24.

Two games in, things look bleak for Indian basketball. Besides atrocious shooting, ball handling is a serious problem for FDHS; the Indians had 18 turnovers against Turner Ashby. The defense has given up an average of 91.5 points in the first two games. In a pre-season letter to parents, Coach Gale asked them to give Fort until January to learn the new system. They have a long way to go.

Grandfather notes: Gus' playing time wasn't much better in this game than the last. He played a little over four minutes. I realize that time isn't supposed to be divided equally among the players, but Fort does substitute 5 new players every minute or so. Each player would receive over twelve minutes of playing time each game if each player got the same opportunity to play. Gus is still shooting 100% from the field after two games and snared a nice offensive rebound during this game. He has zero turnovers for the season thus far. Apparently, these statistics don't matter in the Fort offensive system.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	5	0	1-4	11
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	1	0	3-4	5
Carter Fink	2	0	0-0	4
Trey Miller	1	0	1-2	3
Sam Garber	1	7	1-2	24
Austin Metz	0	1	0-0	3
Evan Braun	1	0	1-1	3
Rhylan Martin	2	0	1-2	5
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	0	3	0-0	9
Jalen Alexander	3	0	0-0	6
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	3	0	1-2	7
TOTAL	20	13	9-17	88

Here is an article about the game which appeared in the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball TA Holds Off Indians' Furious Second-Half Comeback

by CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Dec 1, 2023



Turner Ashby's Solomon Shifflett drives up the court against Fort Defiance's Carter Berry. Daniel Lin / DN-R

BRIDGEWATER — The noise level inside Larry S. Pence Gymnasium was deafening, but most of it was coming from the visiting bleachers behind the Fort Defiance bench. After senior forward Sam Garber drilled a 3-pointer — his seventh of the night — to give the Indians an 88-86 lead with 2:13 remaining, the momentum had completely shifted, and a young Turner Ashby squad featuring three freshmen suddenly found itself in a state of shock.

“When we got down, we called a timeout, and I told them, ‘How are we going to handle this?’” Knights head coach Clay Harris said. “We were facing adversity, and it’s the first time we’ve faced it, so how are we going to respond? I thought we came out, and we responded.”

TA closed the game on an 8-0 run, fueled by buckets from sophomore Solomon Shifflett and freshman Jayden Lacey, to defeat Fort 94-88 in a boys basketball thriller at home Thursday.

Shifflett tied the game out of the timeout before Lacey scored the go-ahead bucket with 1:35 remaining. Fort then missed a number of shots, including multiple attempts off offense rebounds, and Shifflett went 4-of-4 from the charity stripe to close out the impressive non-district win.

“Coach talks about handling adversity and coming past challenges as a group, and I felt like we really came together through teamwork and just found a way to win,” Lacey said.

Led by Lacey and fellow freshman Owen Laver, who both scored a team-high 22 points, the Knights outscored the Indians 29-6 in the second quarter to go into the half up 56-34.

But slowly, Fort chipped away at the lead with Garber heating up from deep, while sophomore point guard Gio Armendariz Cruz scored 10 of his 11 points in the second half as well.

After cutting the deficit to 12 by the end of the third, the Indians continued to grind away in the fourth before Garber eventually hit a trey from the left wing to give the Indians the lead. “I’m proud of them for that second-half effort,” said first-year Fort head coach Mike Gale. “We dug a big hole there. We’re still learning. I’m just proud of them for continuing to battle until the final buzzer and to have a shot. That’s all you can ask for. Halftime didn’t look good. Give our guys a lot of credit for fighting. They’re trying to learn as much as possible, and they have a positive attitude. We came up a little short, but hopefully, this helps us in the long run.”

Garber’s shot proved to be the last points for the Indians, who fell to 0-2 to start the season in their first year under Gale, who is installing The Grinnell System offense into the program.

Garber finished with a game-high 24 points for Fort, while sophomore Tripp Hanger had nine.



Turner Ashby's Henry Riner goes up for a shot over Fort Defiance's Rhylan Martin.
Daniel Lin / DN-R

“We had a few days to prepare, and we went over it,” said Harris, an FDHS alum in his second season at TA. “I told them, ‘Guys, you know yourself, and you need to take a good shot for you and for the team. If a wide-open 3 is a good shot for you and for the team, take it. There in the third quarter, I wish we would’ve taken a bit more. But when you’re hot, I was fine with it.”

Outside of the big nights from Laver and Lacey, freshman Anthony Perez also brought a spark off the bench with nine points, while Shifflett finished with 12, junior Henry Riner added nine during a solid first-half showing, and sophomore wing Caden Simmers finished with eight.

“It was our first varsity game, and it was definitely a challenge, but we were just focused on handling adversity and playing together as a team,” said Laver, who scored 17 of his 22 points in the first half for the Knights. “That’s all we needed to pull it out. We just had to keep going and not let it get to our heads. We had to play through it and play as a team and we did that.”

Turner Ashby (1-0) is back in action Monday at home against non-district opponent Fluvanna County, while Fort (0-2) will travel to non-district foe Rockbridge County (0-1) on Wednesday.

After momentum had shifted on Thursday, the young Knights easily could have folded. Instead, we may have seen the first step the program is taking in growing up rather quickly. “I think it was a great experience, and it really showed how our team rallied together,” Harris said. “It took all 11 of us, and I’m super proud. We have a whole new team from last year, and our kids have bought in throughout the off season. They put in a lot of time over the summer, and I am hoping it’s going to pay off.”

Fort Defiance 26 6 32 24 — 88
Turner Ashby 25 29 22 18 — 94

FORT DEFIANCE (0-2) — G. Arementariz Cruz 5 1-4 11, A. Ransome 1 3-4 5, C. Fink 2 0-0 4, T. Miller 1 1-2 3, S. Garber 8 1-4 24, A. Metz 1 0-0 3, E. Braun 1 1-2 3, R. Martin 2 1-4 5, D. Jones 2 0-0 6, T. Hanger 3 0-0 9, J. Alexander 3 0-0 6, G. Gutshall 1 0-0 2, C. Berry 3 2-2 8. Totals 33 10-22 88.

TURNER ASHBY (1-0) — O. Laver 8 4-6 22, J. Lacey 10 2-4 22, S. Shifflett 4 4-5 12, H. Riner 3 1-2 9, C. Simmers 2 3-4 8, J. Jeffrey 1 0-0 2, M. Moseley 5 0-2 10, A. Perez 4 1-2 9, B. Laver 0 0-0 0. Totals 37 15-25 94.

3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 13 (S. Garber 7, T. Hanger 3, D. Jones 2, A. Metz), Turner Ashby 5 (O. Laver 2, H. Riner 2, C. Simmers).

Game #3: Fort Defiance 91, Rockbridge 71

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

by Joe Hill

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

Game 4: Broadway 108, Fort Defiance 83

Broadway Dominates Fort Defiance, 108 - 83

by Joe Hill

Broadway High School, led by Tristan Yoder's 36 points, easily coasted by the Fort Defiance Indians 108 – 83 on December 8 in the BHS gym. The well-coached Gobblers led the entire way and had a 21 point lead by halftime.

The difference between the two teams was obvious to those few in the gym. Broadway passed the ball well and frequently found players open for easy buckets. Plus, Yoder broke the school record with nine three pointers. Meanwhile, Fort continued its selfish offense with its guards trying to drive into the crowded lane in order to try a wild shot while the rest of the players took (and missed) poor three point shots from the field. The Indians rarely passed the ball to an open player close to the rim. The guard play was especially poor, plagued by bad ball control and wild shots. In short, Broadway's guards had assists and three point baskets; Fort Defiance's had turnovers and missed shots.

Like the first time these two teams met, Broadway opened the lead early, sprinting to a 6 – 0 lead before Carter Berry's drive gave the Indians their first points. BHS extended their lead to 10 – 2 with 5:32 to go in the quarter before Carter Fink turned an offensive rebound into two points. Sam Garber's three pointer got the Indians within 5 at 12 – 7 but that was the closest they would get. Broadway went up 15 – 7 before Evan Braun drained two free throws. After a field goal by Gio Armandariz Cruz, the lead went to 21 – 11 with 2:14 to go. Fort got back to 21 – 15 with a free throw from Gio and another three pointer from Sam but a Yoder three pointer gave BHS a 24 – 15 lead. Tripp Hanger's three pointer made it 24 – 18 but Fort's offense went AWOL for the rest of the quarter while Broadway scored eight consecutive points to take a 32 – 18 lead after one period.

In the second quarter, Fort's offense came back to life for the first six minutes. During his time, Gio made two field goals and went 2 – 3 from the foul line; Sam made two threes, Jalen Alexander made 1 – 2 from the free throw line, Carter Berry scored after a nice pass from Tripp, Bradley Hebb made two free throws and a layup, and Tripp hammered home a three pointer. These 22 points made the deficit 51 – 40 with 2:00 to go in the quarter. Again Fort's offense died during the last two minutes of the quarter, though. Meanwhile, BHS ran out to a 61 – 40 lead at the half.

Evan completed a three point play to start the second half. Sam got a steal and layup to make it 61 – 45 before BHS hit another three pointer. Sam again hit a three pointer and Gio scored on a drive to make the score 66 – 50 with 4:26 to go. Coach Mike Gale then got a technical foul called on him and BHS hit both free throws to make it 68 – 50. Del Ray Jones got a three pointer to fall and Gio had two free throws but by this time BHS had run up a 74 – 55 lead. Bradley's layup plus Trey Miller's free throw got the score to 76 – 58 before BHS scored eight consecutive points. Jasigh Ransome's foul shot and Carter Fink's put back made it 84 – 61 after three periods.

FORT DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

Sam's three pointer and Jasigh's field goal left the Indians behind 84 – 66 but again BHS went on a run and opened up a 91 – 66 lead. Gio scored in close and Sam added both a field goal and a trey to make it 93 – 73 with 5:31 to go. For the remainder of the game, BHS outscored FDHS 13 – 10. Fort got three pointers from Tripp and Evan and offensive rebound scores from Carter Berry and Carter Fink. The final score was 108 – 83.

Sam again led Fort with 25 including seven three pointers. Gio added 15.

Grandfather's note: Gus played more in this game than in the previous three. He had two steals and a couple of rebounds. It was frustrating to see him open under the basket numerous times but his teammates were too interested in firing up their own helter skelter shots instead of feeding him. Fort's brand of basketball this season is hard for me to watch.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	5	0	5-7	15
Bradley Hebb	2	0	2-2	6
Jasigh Ransome	1	0	1-2	3
Carter Fink	3	0	0-0	6
Trey Miller	0	0	1-4	1
Sam Garber	2	7	0-0	25
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	1	1	3-3	8
Rhylan Martin	0	0	0-0	0
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	0	3	0-0	9
Jalen Alexander	0	0	1-2	1
Gus Gutshall	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Berry	3	0	0-0	6
TOTAL	17	12	13-20	83

The article below is from the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Yoder, Gobblers Roll Past Indians

By JOHN BREEDEN Daily News-Record
Dec 9, 2023



Broadway's Tristan Yoder drives up the court against Fort Defiance's Bradley Hebb.

Daniel Lin / DN-R

BROADWAY —

Aside from saving timeouts and getting his guys out of “trouble,” there was little Broadway head coach Dwight Walton felt he could do against non-district opponent Fort Defiance.

“There’s no way that you can control the tempo, because they’re going to control that,” Walton said. “You have to find a way to be strong enough to survive.”

Fortunately for the Gobblers, they survived and thrived through a non-stop, high-pace boys basketball matchup as they defeated the Indians 108-83 on Friday night at BHS, completing the season sweep.

“Our turnovers were way too high, but they couldn’t stop 108 points,” Walton said. “Ultimately, when they’re sending the whole house at your guards, [we] did an amazing job of taking care of the ball and getting it to the next level, so we could go attack and go get those easy buckets. ... My guards are tough as can be, regardless of how many times they turned the ball over. They got 32 minutes of work and got no breaks.”

The victory was monumental as Broadway came three points shy of tying the school record for most points in a single game, set back in 1984 when it scored 111 points.

While the record itself wasn’t discussed, Walton knew they had a chance to score many points.

Walton added that facing Fort Defiance requires prime conditioning and felt they did an excellent job preparing for it.

“We were going to have to put a lot of points up on the board,” Walton said. “You wonder about where your team’s at conditioning-wise, and the past week, I really felt like we’ve turned the corner. We’re finally in basketball shape. Even though we were pulling some guys tonight needing a breather, this is a test of your conditioning. One of the best runners in the school (junior guard Tristan Yoder) was saying, ‘I felt like I just played two games in one.’ If Tristan Yoder’s telling me that, it’s a lot of trips up and down the floor. I’m proud of them for that. They prepared themselves to play this game.”

Yoder led the Gobblers with 36 points and nine 3-pointers to break the school record for most 3-pointers in a single game, a record Yoder set himself against Harrisonburg last season on Feb. 3.

“It’s really exciting,” Yoder said. “We were going for our school record in points, too. We were pretty close to that. It was just a fun night overall. We knew we had a lot of potential for records, so it was a good night.”

The Gobblers might’ve been up by a significant margin for much of the contest, but knowing how the Indians play, Yoder said there wasn’t room to coast at any point.

“They’re going to run up and down the floor, and you’ve got to match that,” Yoder said. “It’s tough. It feels like you’re playing multiple games, because it just takes forever. We did a really good job of not letting off the gas pedal, because if you let off the gas pedal for more than a couple of minutes, they’re going to be right back in it, because of how quick the game goes. I think we did a really good job of handling them.”

It was another historic performance for Yoder, but it was also a standout game for sophomore guard Victor Diaz-Hernandez, who finished with 18 points.

Early in the year, Walton expected the 5-foot-8 underclassman to be challenging to keep off the floor as he stepped up his game.

“That’s what’s happened,” Walton said. “He’s that little spark plug on both sides of the floor. He’s a great on-ball defender. We truly have three point guards with Tristan, [senior Conner Michael], and [Victor] on the floor. That’s a nice luxury for me, especially in a game like this. He shoots the ball well, he loves that floater, he sees people. He’s a sophomore way ahead of his time.”

Junior forwards Eric Santiago and Braden Burkhalter ended with 13 points for Broadway, while senior forward Jet Gonzalez contributed 10 points.

FORT DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

Senior forward Sam Garber led the way with 25 points for Fort Defiance, while sophomore Gio Armendariz Cruz scored 19.

First-year FDHS head coach Mike Gale, the former head coach of the girls varsity team, credited the Gobblers, stating they got outplayed by a physical ball club that will continue to win games this season.

“They were the much better team [on Friday],” Gale said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do, but this is the growing pains we face early in the year.”

The Indians kept up the pace and fought until the final buzzer, which was a positive Gale could take from the tough loss.

“That’s what we kept telling them in the second half,” Gale said. “We’re not going to quit until that final horn, and it’ll pay dividends later in the year — just battling all the way through.”

The Gobblers (4-1) return to action Monday at 7 p.m. to host non-district Page County, while the Indians (1-3) host Turner Ashby on Tuesday at 7:15 p.m.

Friday’s game got the Gobblers out of their comfort zone, but Walton believes the experience will pay dividends in multiple facets.

Walton said he looks forward to returning to their style of play next week while learning from Friday’s action-packed affair.

“Next week’s going to be more like Broadway basketball, but I think we’ll learn a lot from this,” Walton said. “I think we’re going to learn if we can handle that in a press, [facing] presses not as crazy as that, hopefully we’ll be able to handle. That’s preparing us for the future. Believing in each other, transitions, and getting shots and going and finishing, those are things that hopefully pay off in the long run after this.”

Fort Defiance 18 20 22 23 — 83

Broadway 32 29 23 24 — 108

FORT DEFIANCE (1-3) — G. Armendariz Cruz 6 7-8 19, B. Hebb 2 2-2 6, J. Ransome 1 1-4 3, C. Fink 3 0-0 6, T. Miller 0 1-4 1, S. Garber 9 0-0 25, E. Braun 2 3-3 8, R. Martin 0 0-0 0, D. Ray Jones 1 0-0 3, T. Hanger 3 0-0 9, J. Alexander 0 1-2 1, C. Berry 3 0-2 6. Totals 30 15-25 83.

BROADWAY (4-1) — E. Post 0 3-4 3, V. Hernandez 8 2-2 18, S. Post 4 0-0 8, J. Gonzalez 5 0-7 10, C. Michael 3 0-0 7, T. Yoder 10 7-7 36, E. Santiago 5 3-3 13, B. Burkhalter 6 1-3 13. Totals 41 16-26 108.

3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 12 (S. Garber 7, T. Hanger 3, E. Braun, D. Ray Jones), Broadway 10 (T. Yoder 9, C. Michael)

Game 5: Fort Defiance 89, Turner Ashby 87

FDHS Late Spurt Gives Indians a 89 – 87 win over Turner Ashby

by Joe Hill

Fort Defiance rallied from a 79 – 76 deficit with 2:33 to go to take a 89 – 87 win over Turner Ashby on December 12 in the Don Landes Gym. Carter Fink had two big put backs in the final minute and Gio Armendariz Cruz had a drive for two then iced the game with two free throws with 9.3 seconds left to give FDHS its second win of the season. Fort is now 2 – 3 for the year.

Sam Garber led the home team with 22 points. Gio added 12, 11 of which came in the 4th quarter, Bradley Hebb scored 10, Carter Fink 9, and Gus Gutshall 8 as the Indians got revenge on the Knights who beat them 94 – 88 on November 30.

The game started strangely as Fort was assessed a technical foul for dunking in the warm-ups. TAHS hit one of two free throws to take a 1 – 0 lead. Jasigh Ransome scored on a layup to give FD a 2 – 1 lead. After a Turner Ashby bucket, Gus got an offensive rebound and made a nice put back to put the Indians up 4 – 3. Bradley scored on a drive then Trey Miller hit a three pointer to push the lead to 9 – 5. With 3:09 to go, Bradley hit a three pointer giving the Indians a quick 12 – 5 lead. Gio made one of two free throws then the Knights scored to make it 13 – 7. Sam then got a breakaway and slammed down two to give Fort its biggest lead at 15 – 7. TAHS clawed back to 15 – 14 before Sam's putback made it 17 – 14. TAHS then scored the next four points to go up 18 – 17 but Rhylan Martin's three pointer gave Fort a 20 – 18 lead at the end of the first quarter.

TAHS quickly shot ahead 22 – 20 until Sam hit a three pointer and followed it with a drive. Rhylan hit one of two free throws and Bradley did the same which gave the home team a 27 – 22 lead with 5:05 to go in the quarter. The visitors scored thirteen straight points to take a 35 – 27 lead with 2:33 to go. Gus then kicked the ball out to Jasigh who hit a three pointer to break Fort's dry spell. After a TAHS basket, Sam got two and Carter Fink turned an offensive rebound into two points but still TAHS led 39 – 34 with 35.8 seconds left. TAHS scored again but Tripp Hanger fired in a three pointer near the buzzer to leave the score at TAHS 41, FDHS 37 at the half.

During the first half, Fort was plagued with poor ball handling and shooting by its guards who committed numerous turnovers and missed a bunch of shots. Offensive rebounds and defensive steals kept the Indians within striking distance at the break, though.

Del Ray Jones opened the third quarter with a three pointer. After a TAHS score, Carter Berry got a bucket on an assist from Gio. Turner Ashby went up 47 – 42 but Bradley scored on two consecutive drives to get the Indians within a point. They finally got the lead back when Del Ray fed Gus under the basket for two. Sam was fouled shooting a three pointer and he made all three foul shots which gave Fort a 51 – 47 lead. After the visitors scored again, Jalen Alexander made two of two from the free throw line and Fort's lead improved to 53 – 49. Austin Metz

made a field goal which put the Indians up by six but TAHS roared back to take a 58 – 55 lead. Gus got an offensive rebound and was fouled on his shot. He buried both free throws to make it 58 – 57 in favor of the visitors. After a TAHS score, Gus again scored in close with a nice feed from Jasigh. TAHS made two free throws to go up 62 – 59 then Sam stole the ball and pulled up for a two pointer to make it 62 – 61. TAHS jumped out to a 66 – 61 lead but Del Ray’s tip at the buzzer got Fort within three at 66 – 63 at the end of the quarter. Del Ray had a superb quarter, coming up with several defensive steals.

In the fourth quarter, Carter Fink’s trey tied the score. Sam scored on an assist from Del Ray but TA’s three pointer followed by a two pointer gave the lead back to them at 71 – 68. Sam hit one of two free throws making it 71 – 69 with 6:22 to go. Both teams then went ice cold for two minutes. Gio finally scored at the 4:28 mark to knot the score at 71’s. Rhylan got a nice feed from Jalen to give Fort a 73 – 71 lead but the Knights scored six in a row to take a four point lead. Sam’s three pointer got the Indians within one at 77 – 76 before TAHS extended their lead to 79 – 76 with under three minutes left.

Led by Gio and Carter Fink, the Indians outscored the Knights 13 – 8 in the last 2:33. Gio got two straight drives to drop, tying the score at 80 – 80. He made one of two free throws to give FD a 81 – 80 lead but TA scored again to retake the lead at 82 – 81. Carter then made a nice tip in and Gio again scored on a drive making the score 85 – 82 with 38 seconds left. Carter again scored in close to give the home team a commanding 87 – 82 lead with 23 seconds to go. Gio’s two free throws with 9.3 seconds left gave Fort a 89 – 85 lead. The final score was 89 – 87.

Grandfather’s note: Gus had his best game of the season, scoring eight points and getting numerous offensive rebounds. It was good to see him playing more and doing well.

Fort’s Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	4	0	4-6	12
Bradley Hebb	3	1	1-3	10
Jasigh Ransome	1	1	0-0	5
Carter Fink	3	1	0-0	9
Trey Miller	0	1	0-0	3
Sam Garber	6	2	4-5	22
Austin Metz	1	0	0-0	2
Evan Braun	0	0	0-0	0
Rhylan Martin	1	1	1-2	6
Del Ray Jones	1	1	0-0	5
Tripp Hanger	0	1	0-0	3
Jalen Alexander	0	0	2-2	2
Gus Gutshall	3	0	2-4	8
Carter Berry	1	0	0-0	2
TOTAL	24	9	14-24	89

The article below is from the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Indians Light It Up In Close Win Over TA

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Dec 13, 2023

After battling in a down-to-the-wire thriller less than two weeks ago, Fort Defiance and Turner Ashby did the same.

Sam Garber, a 6-foot-5 standout senior forward, scored a team-high 22 points as the Indians earned a hard-fought 89-87 victory over the Knights in non-district boys basketball action at Don Landes Gymnasium on Tuesday.

There were 13 players that reached the scoring column for Fort, which rallied in the fourth quarter for the win.

FDHS sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz continued his strong early-season play, finishing with 12 points, including 11 in that final frame, while junior guard Bradley Hebb also hit double digits with 10 points in the victory.

Carter Fink, a 6-foot-3 senior forward, scored seven of his nine points in the fourth quarter for the Indians.

Junior forward Gus Gutshall added eight points for Fort, while junior forward Rhylan Martin finished with six.

The Knights were led by sophomore guard Solomon Shifflett, who exploded for a career-high 23 points, including 17 in the second half, while senior wing Jack Fox continued to play well with 18 points of his own in the loss.

Jayden Lacey, a 6-foot standout freshman guard, also hit double figures with 12 points for Turner Ashby.

Sophomore forward Jackson Jeffrey finished with 10 points for TA, while senior forward Brad Moseley had nine.

The Indians (2-3) are back in action Thursday with a non-district home game against Alleghany, while the Knights (3-2) will open up their Valley District schedule with a home game against William Monroe on Thursday.

*Turner Ashby 18 23 25 21 — 87
Fort Defiance 20 17 26 26 — 89*

TURNER ASHBY (3-2) — O. Laver 2 1-2 5, J. Lacey 5 1-2 12, S. Shifflett 10 2-2 23, J. Riner 1 0-2 3, J. Fox 7 3-6 18, C. Simmers 0 1-1, J. Jeffrey 5 0-0 10, B. Moseley 3 2-3 9, A. Perez 2 2-2 6, B. Laver 0 0-0 0. Totals 35 12-20 87.

FORT DEFIANCE (2-3) — G. Armendariz Cruz 4 4-6 12, B. Hebb 4 1-2 10, J. Ransome 2 0-2 5, C. Fink 4 0-0 9, T. Miller 1 0-0 3, S. Garber 8 4-5 22, A. Metz 1 0-0 2, E. Braun 0 0-0 0, R. Martin 2 1-2 6, D. Jones 2 0-0 5, T. Hanger 1 0-0 3, J. Alexander 0 2-2 2, G. Gutshall 3 2-4 8, C. Berry 10-0 2. Totals 33 14-23 89.

3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 9 (S. Garber 2, B. Hebb, J. Ransome, C. Fink, T. Miller, R. Martin, D. Jones, T. Hanger), Turner Ashby 5 (J. Lacey, S. Shifflett, J. Riner, J. Fox, B. Moseley)

Game 6: Allegheny 83, Fort Defiance 56

Cold Second Half Dooms FDHS Against Allegheny

by Joe Hill

The Allegheny Cougars beat the Fort Defiance Indians 83 – 56 on December 14 in the FDHS gym. This game featured two completely different halves. In the first half, Fort Defiance shot better than normal, made some good passes, and led 37 – 31. In the second half, the Indians' offense died and its defense was nonexistent. Allegheny outscored FDHS 52 – 19 after the break including a 14 – 3 run to open the half and a 24 – 1 run midway in the 4th quarter. The Cougars improved their season record to 4 – 1 while Fort fell to 2 – 4.

The game couldn't have started better for the home team. FD ran out to a 10 – 0 lead on a three pointer by Del Ray Jones, a deuce by Gus Gutshall with an assist from Gio Armendariz Cruz, a three pointer by Sam Garber, and a put back by Carter Fink at the 4:20 mark. Allegheny couldn't get a basket to drop until the 3:25 mark. Tripp Hanger made a three pointer and Gio had two of three free throws with 1:34 to go giving the Indians a 15 – 6 lead but AHS scored the last six points of the quarter to make it FDHS 15, AHS 12 after one period.

Fort continued good play in the second half. Carter Fink took a pass from Gio and scored in close. Sam made one of two free throws and Gio scored three points with the old-fashioned three point play to give FD a 21 – 14 lead. Sam's three returned the lead to ten. After AHS made its only three pointer of the half, Del Ray again popped in a trey to give FD a 30 – 21 lead. Gio's two free throws extended the lead to 32 – 21 with 3:05 to go. Allegheny then made a run to cut the lead to 32 – 29 before Carter Berry scored after an offensive rebound. Tripp's three pointer in the last minute gave the Indians a 37 – 31 lead at the half.

Any thought of this good fortune continuing in the second half was lost in the first four minutes of the second half which saw AHS score the first six points of the half. After Sam hit a three pointer, Allegheny ran off eight more in a row, taking its first lead of the game at 42 – 40 with 4:11 to go then quickly extending that lead to 44 – 40. Fort got back within two when Gus scored on an out-of-bounds play but again AHS was able to easily break Fort's press, getting easy layups and scored the next 13 points to go up 57 – 42. Gio scored on a drive but that meant Fort only got seven points the entire quarter while Allegheny scored 26.

Fort's misery continued in the fourth. One exception was Carter Fink's play. Carter scored six points early in the fourth including two on a nice pass from Del Ray to close the gap to 59 – 50 but again the offense and defense collapsed allowing Allegheny to coast with a 24 – 1 run to make the score 83 – 51 with 1:30 to go. Carter Berry got a three and Rhyden Martin a field goal to close the scoring for Fort. The final was Allegheny 83, Fort Defiance 56.

Sam again led Fort's scoring with 13 but he injured his hand in the second half when he slapped the backboard trying to block a shot. Carter Fink and Gio each tossed in ten points. But unlike other games where, thanks to the platoon system of play, most players got on the score board, in this game FDHS had six players who didn't score a point. Fort rebounded fairly well against the tall Cougars who featured seven players on their roster 6' 2" or taller. Hunter DePriest led the

Cougars with 17 points, one of four Alleghany players to reach double figures. He got numerous snowbirds as the Cougars beat the Fort press.

Grandfather’s note: Gus had a decent game, scoring four points and getting a couple offensive rebounds. He even got to start the game! The general mood of the Fort Defiance fans around us is they do not think this system of basketball is working. It seemed to work for a half tonight but the second half was disastrous.

Another point of interest to me is that Alleghany had six adult coaches sitting on its bench. Why does a school need six coaches? Perhaps this is because Alleghany High School merged with Covington High School this year. Last year when FDHS played Alleghany, they were the Mountaineers. This year they were the Cougars. The combined school is now a Class 3 size school whereas Fort Defiance remains a Class 2 school.

Fort’s Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	2	0	6-8	10
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Fink	5	0	0-0	10
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	0	4	1-2	13
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	2
Evan Braun	0	0	0-0	0
Rhylan Martin	1	0	0-0	2
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	0	2	0-0	6
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	2	0	0-0	4
Carter Berry	1	1	0-0	5
TOTAL	11	9	7-10	56

The following article appeared in the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Big Second Half Propels Allegheny Past Fort

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record

Dec 15, 2023

In Don Landes Gymnasium on Thursday, a big second half from Allegheny propelled it to a convincing 83-56 rout of Fort Defiance in non-district action on Thursday.

Senior forward Sam Garber again led the way for the Indians with 13 points in the setback, while sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz and senior forward Carter Fink contributed 10 each.

Fort senior forward Dell Ray Jones and sophomore guard Tripp Hanger finished with six points apiece, while junior forward Carter Berry had five, and junior forward Gus Gutshall had four.

The Indians (2-4) will face Monticello on Thursday in a tournament at Fluvanna County High.

Allegheny 12 19 26 26 — 83

Fort Defiance 15 22 7 12 — 56

ALLEGHANY (4-1) — X. Hayslett 2 0-2 4, J. Smith 1 0-0 3, H. DePriest 8 0-0 17, D. Jordan 3 0-0 6, E. Entsminger 2 0-0 4, A. Webb 2 0-0 6, C.Harden 5 0-2 10, S. Brown 4 0-0 8, K. Caldwell 2 0-0 4, C. DePriest 4 0-1 9, J. Morris 0 0-0 0, P. Turner 6 0-0 12, M. Smith 0 0-0 0. Totals 39 0-5 83.

FORT DEFIANCE (2-4) — G. Armendariz Cruz 2 6-7 10, B. Hebb 0 0-0 0, J. Ransome 0 0-0 0, C. Fink 5 0-0 10, T. Miller 0 0-0 0, S. Garber 4 1-2 13, R. Martin 1 0-0 2, D. Jones 2 0-0 6, T. Hanger 2 0-0 6, J. Alexander 0 0-0 0, G. Gutshall 2 0-0 4, C. Berry 2 0-0 5. Totals 20 7-9 56.

3-Point Goals — Allegheny 4 (A. Webb 2, H. DePriest, C. DePriest), Fort Defiance 9 (S. Garber 4, D. Jones 2, T. Hanger 2, C. Berry).



Game 7: Monticello 77, Fort Defiance 62

Monticello Runs Past Fort Defiance 77 - 62

by Joe Hill

The Monticello Mustangs beat the Fort Defiance Indians 77 – 62 on December 21 in the Fluvanna County High gym on the first day of the Route 53 Holiday Bash Basketball Tournament. The game was, unfortunately, another version of what is becoming commonplace for the season:

- Very poor shooting and shot selection from the field
- Ineffective press with Monticello getting many easy layups
- Excessive turnovers by the guards especially after they penetrate too far in the lane
- Too selfish of an offense with players not looking for each other but rather for a shot
- Awful free throw shooting (4 – 16)
- No set offensive plays but rather a free-for-all from the three point zone
- Big men on both offense and defense play mostly outside the three point line instead of near the rim
- Forwards only way of touching the basketball is to get an offensive rebound

Fort never led in this one. Monticello raced out to a 7 – 0 lead with 5:53 to go in the first. Carter Fink's putback finally got the Indians on the board. Sam Garber rattled home a three pointer after Fort had fallen behind 10 – 2. He added one of two free throws after Monticello had scored again and FDHS got within six at 3:21 as Gio Armendariz Cruz got a steal and a layup to make it 14 – 8. The two teams swapped buckets with Fort's coming from Bradley Hebb. Del Ray Jones banged in a three pointer to make it 16 – 13 in favor of the Mustangs. After a Monticello free throw, Gio's layup left the score at 17 – 15 at the end of the first period. This was the closest Fort would get.

Monticello went up 25 – 17 as Fort's only points came from Bradley's deuce. Sam hit one of three free throws and Bradley again made a field goal but Monticello extended its lead to 31 – 20. Jalen Alexander scored two on a nice pass from Sam and Gio added a layup plus one to make it 33 – 25. Del Ray got another three pointer to go but Monticello saw its lead at the half at 37 – 28.

A Mustang triple made it 40 – 28 before Carter Fink again got a putback. Bradley made a nice fade away shot in the lane but, meanwhile, MHS scored twice more by beating the press to run out to a 46 – 32 lead. Jalen got two on a nice pass from Gio and Jasigh Ransome got a three to fall to make it 46 – 37. MHS then ran off seven consecutive points before Gio's layup made it 53 – 39. Carter Fink again got two points off an offensive rebound, Tripp Hanger hit a three pointer, and Sam made another three but MHS finished the quarter strong to take a 64 – 47 lead at the end of the period. Fort's shooting miseries at the foul line were obvious by this time, having made only 3 of 14 tries at this juncture.

Fort and Monticello traded baskets in the fourth quarter. Fort's points came on a foul shot by Bradley, a layup by Gio, a bucket by Carter Berry, a field goal off an out of bounds play by

FORT DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

Carter Fink, two short jumpers by Bradley, one field goal by Sam, and one from Jalen with an assist from Jasigh. The final was 77 – 62.

The Route 53 Holiday Bash featured boys basketball teams from Fort, Monticello, Fluvanna County, and William Monroe. The second day of the tournament will pit FDHS against Fluvanna County and Monticello against William Monroe. With the win, Monticello evened its season record at 5 – 5 while Fort fell to 2 – 5.

Bradley Hebb led the Indians with 13. Gio had 11 and Sam, who struggled to get his shot to go in the game, scored 10. None of the Fort players shot the ball well. Rhylan Martin was out with an injury.

Grandfather's note: Gus played sporadically except in the fourth quarter. He did not score but picked up a couple rebounds. This game was undoubtedly frustrating to him as it was to me.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	5	0	1-1	11
Bradley Hebb	6	0	1-6	13
Jasigh Ransome	0	1	0-0	3
Carter Fink	3	0	0-4	6
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	2	2-5	10
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	0	0-0	0
Rhylan Martin	0	0	0-0	0
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	0	1	0-0	3
Jalen Alexander	3	0	0-0	6
Gus Gutshall	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Berry	2	0	0-0	4
TOTAL	20	6	4-16	62

Game 8: Fluvanna County 102, Fort Defiance

Fluvanna County hands Fort Defiance Third Consecutive Loss, 102 – 86

by Joe Hill

The Fluvanna County Flucos improved their season record to 3 – 5 with a 102 – 86 trouncing of the Fort Defiance Indians on December 22 on the second day of the Route 53 Holiday Bash Basketball Tournament. Fort fell to 2 – 6. The game was played at Monticello High School.

Fort played good basketball for the first half of the first quarter, running up a 20 – 12 lead before allowing Fluvanna to go on a 17 – 2 run. Tripp Hanger was red hot, hitting 3 three point shots in the quarter. He got good help shooting from Del Ray Jones and Austin Metz who also pitched in treys for the Indians. Bradley Hebb, Gio Armendariz Cruz, and Jasigh Ransome each had field goals but the highlight of the quarter came when Gus Gutshall picked off a pass and fed Sam Garber who streaked down the court and slammed home a dunk. The offense put up 29 points in the quarter including two from Carter Fink on an out-of-bounds play in the final minute. Unfortunately, the defense was AWOL and Fluvanna County led 31 – 29 after one quarter.

The second quarter was neck-and-neck for most of the quarter. Sam's three pointer gave FDHS a 32 – 31 lead and Carter Fink's deuce after a FCHS field goal made it FD 34, FC 33 at the 6:30 mark. Tripp banged home two more three pointers, the first one coming on a nice kickout from Gus. Gio's layup gave Fort a 42 – 35 lead. Fluvanna then went on a run, aided by turnovers by Fort's guards. FDHS got two free throws from Gio but meanwhile Fluvanna had retaken the lead at 46 – 44. Jasigh's free throw got Fort back within one, then Sam scored to give Fort its final lead of the night at 47 – 46. Fluvanna scored easily after beating the Fort press and led by three. 50 – 47 at the 1:57 mark. After extending the lead to 53 – 47, Jasigh's bucket got Fort within four but FCHS got the final basket of the quarter and led 55 – 49 at the half.

There were a few bright spots in the third, including a sequence where Sam got a steal then pulled up and drained a three pointer. He followed that with a nice step-back three pointer. But the only other points Fort got manage during this period were a free throw and layup from Gio. When the dust settled, FCHS had gone on an 18 – 9 run and led 73 – 58 with 4:24 to go in the quarter. Carter Fink scored on an out-of-bounds lay, Sam turned an offensive rebound into two points, and Del Ray bombed in a three pointer at the 3:12 mark but Fluvanna still led 77 – 65 at this point. For the rest of the quarter, all Fort could manage were free throws from Tripp, Carter F., Jasigh, and Sam plus a field goal from Sam. Fort fell behind 89 – 72 at the end of the quarter.

Fluvanna repeatedly got three-on-one fast breaks after beating Fort's press or getting defensive rebounds and quickly getting the ball down the floor. Fort's players tried to crash the board on each offensive shot leaving it easy for its opposition to turn a defensive rebound into a fast break.

It looked like Fluvanna would score 120 points in the game by this point but Fort did buckle down somewhat in the fourth quarter, limiting them to just 13 points as Fluvanna emptied their bench. Fort got three pointers from Tripp and Jasigh and field goals from Gio and Evan Braun. The final score was 102 – 86.

Tripp led the Indians with 20 points. Sam got 18 and Gio 11. After the game, awards were given for the All-Academic Team, Sportsmanship, and All Tournament Team. Gus was chosen on the All-Academic Team, Austin for the Sportsmanship award, and Sam made the All-Tournament Team.

Grandfather's note: Gus played some in every quarter. He did not score but picked up a couple rebounds and steals. He did seem genuinely happy about being picked for the All-Academic Team.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	4	0	3-4	11
Bradley Hebb	1	0	0-2	2
Jasigh Ransome	2	1	2-3	9
Carter Fink	3	0	1-2	7
Trey Miller	0	0	1-2	1
Sam Garber	4	3	1-3	18
Austin Metz	0	1	0-0	3
Evan Braun	1	0	2-2	4
Rhylan Martin	0	0	0-0	0
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	6	0	2-2	20
Jalen Alexander	1	0	0-0	2
Gus Gutshall	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Berry	1	0	1-2	3
TOTAL	17	13	13-24	86

Game 9: Fort Defiance 81, Rockbridge 48

Fort Defiance outslugs listless Rockbridge 81 - 48

by Joe Hill

The Fort Defiance Indians improved their season record to 3 – 6 with an easy 81 – 48 victory over the Rockbridge Wildcats on January 2 in the Don Landes Gym at FDHS. Rockbridge saw their season record drop to 1 – 10. Gio Armendariz Cruz led the Indians with 22 points followed by Sam Garber with 19 and Tripp Hanger with 10. Ten FDHS players got on the scoreboard as Fort led all the way before a sparse crowd. The game was tied only once, 3 – 3. Fort took a ten point lead at the end of the first quarter and coasted the rest of the game.

Sam opened the scoring with a three pointer from the top of the key. After RCHS tied it at the 6:37 mark, Tripp bomberd in a three, Gio scored on a drive, and Sam hit his second three with an assist from Gus Gutshall to give Fort an 11 – 3 lead. Sam later hit a free throw to make it 12 – 3 before Rockbridge scored the next five points. Gio’s drive pushed the lead to 14 – 8, then Bradley Hebb took a pass from Jalen Alexander and scored in the paint to make it 16 – 8. Sam found Jalen open underneath for an easy two and Bradley scored again on a drive to make it 20 – 8 before Rockbridge scored at the end of the quarter with Fort leading, 20 – 10.

The second quarter started the same way the first did—Sam hit a three pointer. Sam then hit one of two free throws to extend Fort’s lead to 24 – 12. Gio bombed in a three pointer at the 3:38 mark to make it 27 – 12 then he followed that with a drive to extend the home team’s lead to 29 – 12. After a RCHS score, Tripp hit one of two free throws. Rockbridge then hit three of four free throws to make it 30 – 17 with 1:41 to go in the half. Evan Braun drilled home a trey and Jalen hit one of two free throws to extend Fort’s lead to 34 – 17. The half ended 37 – 20 as Gio was able to get his three pointer off just before the buzzer.

Sam opened the scoring in the second half with a driving layup after a steal. Rockbridge closed the score to 39 - 23 before Gio hit two free throws then turned an offensive rebound into two points. Jalen likewise was able to score on a put-back to give FDHS a comfortable 45 – 23 lead with 4:21 to go in the quarter. After a Rockbridge three pointer, Sam hit a trey and Evan followed with his second three pointer of the night making the score FDHS 51, RCPS 30. Rockbridge hit another three pointer but again Gio was able to score just as time ran out to give FDHS a 55 – 33 lead after three periods.

Gus opened the scoring in the fourth quarter with a deuce in the paint on a putback. Gio’s drive made the score 59 – 35. Rockbridge scored the next four points before Jasigh Ransome hit one of two free throws to make the score 60 – 39. Carter Fink made one of two free throws, Tripp hit another three pointer, and Del Ray Jones scored on an out-of-bounds play to give Fort a 66 – 41 lead with 4:02 to go. Sam’s three pointer made it 69 – 43 then Rockbridge scored three to make it 69 – 46. Gio hit a floater in the lane then Carter Fink went to work, scoring one of two free throws then two consecutive baskets in the paint pushing the lead to 79 – 48 with just over a minute to go. Jalen’s two free throws ended the scoring as Fort took an 81 – 48 win for their third win of the season.

Despite the easy win, it was not Fort’s best game of the season. Two of Fort’s three wins this season have come against Rockbridge which has a very weak team this year. Fort’s shooting was far from decent and, once again, players rarely looked for the open man.

Grandfather’s note: Gus played some in every quarter. He got one bucket and picked up a couple of rebounds.

Fort’s Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	7	2	2-2	22
Bradley Hebb	2	0	0-1	4
Jasigh Ransome	0	0	1-2	1
Carter Fink	3	0	2-4	8
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	5	2-5	19
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	2	0-0	6
Rhylan Martin	0	0	0-0	0
Del Ray Jones	1	0	0-0	2
Tripp Hanger	0	3	1-2	10
Jalen Alexander	2	0	3-4	7
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	0	0	0-0	0
TOTAL	17	12	11-20	81

The following short article appeared in the Harrisonburg Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Indians Roll Past Wildcats

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Jan 3, 2024

Sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz erupted for a season-high 22 points as Fort Defiance earned an 81-48 non-district win over Rockbridge County on Tuesday.

Senior forward Sam Garber added 19 points for the Indians in the home victory, while sophomore guard TrippHanger scored 10 and senior forward Carter Fink added eight.

The Wildcats were led by senior guard Henry Lambert with 15 points in the loss, while senior center Milo Mulitalo scored 12, and junior forward Sam Ballstaedt chipped in with six.

Fort (3-6) is back in action Friday at home against Riverheads (4-6) in a Shenandoah District matchup, while Rockbridge (1-10) will host unbeaten Spotswood (10-0) in a Valley contest.

Game 10: Fort Defiance 108, Riverheads 82

Fort Defiance opens Shenandoah District play with a 108 – 82 drubbing of Riverheads

by Joe Hill

The Fort Defiance Indians, aided by a remarkable 20 – 0 run in the second quarter, overwhelmed a tired Riverheads team 108 – 82 in the Don Landes Gym on January 5. Fort roared back from a 40 – 23 deficit at the 6:21 mark in the second quarter to take a 43 – 40 lead with 2:23 left in the period. From there it was all FDHS as they improved their season record to 4 – 6, 1 – 0 in the Shenandoah District. Riverheads fell to 4 – 8, 0 – 3.

The first quarter had the visiting Gladiators dominating FDHS. After Gio Armendariz Cruz tied the score 2 – 2 with a drive, Riverheads scored the next five points to go up 7 – 2 before Sam Garber scored in close. Riverheads hit a trey then Tripp Hanger hit the first of his four three pointers to make it 10 – 7 in favor of the visitors. Riverheads got an easy snowbird after a missed free throw by the Indians, then added a field goal and a three pointer to go up 17 – 7 before Jasigh Ransome banged home a three pointer. Jasigh then made two free throws to pull the Indians within five at 17 – 12. Riverheads extended their lead to 22 – 12 before Gio hit two free throws. Their lead went to 24 – 15 after Evan Braun made one of two free throws. Jasigh made another three pointer and Sam added two on a drive but Riverheads, aided by good free throw shooting, jumped out to a 32 – 20 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The second quarter started poorly for the Indians as Riverheads scored the first five points to go up 37 – 20. After Del Ray Jones made a three pointer for FDHS, Riverheads answered with a three of their own to take a 40 – 23 lead with 6:21 to go in the quarter. This is when the script took an abrupt change. Over the next four minutes, Fort got hot both shooting and on defense with numerous steals. Rhylan Martin hit a field goal then a three pointer. Jasigh made two points on a drive. Carter Fink got two points on an offensive rebound. Gio made two free throws with 3:32 to go getting the home team within six at 40 – 34. Trey hit two free throws then Del Ray bombed in another three pointer to make it 40 – 39. Then, Trey was fouled shooting a three pointer and made two of his three shots to give FDHS their first lead at 41 – 40 with 2:23 to go. Fort would not give up the lead the rest of the night. Gio scored two on a nice pass from Carter Fink then he made two consecutive drives to send the home team into the locker room at half with a 47 – 42 lead. Fort had outscored Riverheads 27 – 10 in the quarter.

The Indians poured it on in the third quarter as Riverheads started to wilt under the intense pressure from Fort. Jasigh scored on a drive, Trey made another three, then Sam hit a three to give Fort a 55 – 48 lead. Sam's field goal and Evan's triple extended the lead to 60 – 48. Gio scored again in the paint to increase the lead to 62 – 50. After two Riverheads free throws, Gus Gutshall took a nice pass from Jasigh and scored to make it 64 – 52. Tripp scored on a layup with 2:21 to go and Sam's deuce made it 68 – 53 with 1:10 left in the quarter. Tripp hit another three pointer and Gio's two foul shots ended the third quarter for FDHS with the Indians enjoying a 73- 57 lead.

The fourth quarter saw Fort score 35 points as Riverheads tired. Gio drove for two, Sam bombed in another three pointer, as did both Trey and Tripp as FDHS ran up a 84 – 63 lead with 5:20 to go. Gio and Carter Fink each scored in the paint then Jalen Anderson made one of two free throws to make it 89 – 70. Sam took a nice feed from Jalen for an easy two points to make it 91 – 70. Riverheads closed the score to 91 – 76 before Gio made two more free throws and Sam banged in another three to make it 96 – 76. Tripp's fourth three pointer ran the Indian score to 99 and Sam broke the century mark on a drive with 1:07 to go. He was fouled on the shot and his free throw made the score 102 – 82. Fort's scoring ended with three pointers from Rhylan and Trey.

Just glancing at the score, one would think Fort Defiance had a great game. It was certainly a fine comeback after a slow start, but the Indians left plenty of room for improvement. For example, they missed 19 of 36 free throws and had plenty of turnovers though Riverheads had many more. Three point shooting was better than it has been; Fort made 17 treys in the contest. Fort played without Bradley Hebb who appeared to be injured and was not in uniform.

Sam and Gio each had 22 points. Tripp had 14 and Trey had his best game of the season with 13 points. Jasigh was the 5th Indian scoring in double figures with 12. Eleven players scored for FDHS. Fort continues its Shenandoah District play next week with games against Waynesboro and Buffalo Gap.

Grandfather's note: Despite the win, I was not smiling at the end of this game. Gus did not play one second in the fourth quarter despite the insurmountable lead. When he did play in the first three quarters, he had zero turnovers, scored a field goal, and got a couple of offensive rebounds. He had zero fouls. I cannot fathom the coaches' reasoning of keeping him and Austin Metz on the bench for the entire quarter while they rotated five players at a time throughout the quarter. Gus did play some in the first three quarters and did well. There were twelve family members who attended this game to see him play and we all left with an empty feeling. Ugh!



Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	7	0	8-8	22
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	2	2	2-2	12
Carter Fink	2	0	0-6	4
Trey Miller	0	3	4-5	13
Sam Garber	6	3	1-3	22
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	1	1-6	4
Rhylan Martin	1	2	0-2	8
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	1	4	0-0	14
Jalen Alexander	0	0	1-2	1
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	0	0	0-0	0
TOTAL	20	17	17-36	108

The following article appeared in the Staunton News Leader:

Shenandoah District boys basketball

Fort Defiance topped the 100-point mark for the first time this year behind 22 points from both Gio Armendariz Cruz and Sam Garber. Fort beat **Riverheads** 108-82.

Riverheads jumped out to a 32-20 lead after the first quarter, getting 12 points from JP Crawford, but Fort rallied in the second quarter for a five-point lead and continued to stretch the lead throughout the second half.

In addition to Armendariz Cruz and Garber, three other Fort players finished in double figures in the win. Tripp Hanger had 14 points, Trey Miller finished with 13 and Jasigh Ransome had 12 points in the win.

Crawford led all scorers with 23 points for Riverheads while Jackson Brammer added 14 for the Gladiators. Riverheads dropped to 4-8 on the season.

Game 11: Fort Defiance 105, Waynesboro 95

Garber's 37 leads FDHS past hapless Waynesboro 105 - 95

by Joe Hill

Senior Sam Garber got a career high 37 points, including 10 three pointers, as the Fort Defiance Indians ran past the Waynesboro Little Giants 105 – 95 on January 10 in the Waynesboro Gym. Fort won its third straight game and upped its season record to 5 – 6, 2 – 0 in the Shenandoah District while Waynesboro fell to 1 – 11, 0 – 4. Fort, deploying its run-and-gun offense, also got a career high 27 points from sophomore Gio Armandariz Cruz and 13 from senior Carter Fink.

Despite breaking the century mark for the second straight game, Fort did not dominate the Waynesboro lads who actually led the visitors 84 – 83 with 5:19 to go in the contest. Fort then went on a 10 – 0 run, aided by three scores on drives by Gio, to seal the victory.

Sam was hot in the first half, hitting seven of his ten three pointers in the first two periods. He opened scoring in the game with two treys. Waynesboro got a field goal and a three of their own to pull within one at 6 – 5 then Jasigh Ransome hit a three for the Indians. Waynesboro tied the score at 9's then Gio scored on a drive. With the score 12 – 11 in favor of the Little Giants, Austin Metz hit a three pointer from the top of the key to give FDHS a 14 – 12 lead.

Waynesboro tied the score then Carter Berry hit a three from the top of the key. Carter Fink followed that with a put back off an offensive rebound to give Fort a 19 – 14 lead. Sam's third three of the contest made it 22 – 14 then Waynesboro scored to make it 22 – 16. Rhylan Martin took a nice pass from Gus Gutshall and banged home a two pointer to make it 24 – 16 but Waynesboro responded with two layups off fast breaks to make it 24 – 20. Tripp broke loose for a layup then Sam hit his fourth three pointer of the quarter to make it 29 – 20. Waynesboro scored four straight before Gio ended the scoring in the quarter with a drive to the paint to make it 31 – 24 in favor of FDHS after one period.

Gio opened scoring in the second quarter with another drive. After Waynesboro scored six consecutive points, mostly by beating Fort's press, Sam's fifth three pointer made it 36 – 30. Waynesboro got a field goal then Gio turned an offensive rebound into two points to make it 38 – 32. Tripp then fed Gus nicely inside and the junior scored with 5:24 to go giving Fort a 40 – 32 advantage. Jasigh's driving layup pushed the lead to 42 – 32. Waynesboro responded with a bucket then Sam hit his sixth three pointer to make it 45 – 34. Fort's next points came from Carter Fink at the foul line but only after Waynesboro had pulled within five at 45 - 40. Carter again made one of two free throws then Waynesboro made two free throws of their own to make the score 47 – 42 with 1:50 to go in the half. Gio's field goal and Sam's seventh three pointer gave Fort a 54 – 46 halftime lead.

Waynesboro wouldn't go away. In the third quarter, Fort got Sam's eighth and ninth three pointers but meanwhile Waynesboro got back within five at 60 - 55. Gio's two free throws made it 62 – 55 but Waynesboro scored the next four points to get within three at the 5:23 mark. Gio's bucket in the paint returned Fort's margin to five at 64 – 59 then FDHS went cold. Waynesboro knotted the score at 64 – 64 with 3:59 to go in the quarter. Gio hit a three pointer and Fort led 67 – 66 with 3:13 to go. Waynesboro made two free throws to take a 68 – 67 advantage with 2:46 to go before Sam scored in close to return the lead to the visitors. Sam got two more after

Waynesboro had retaken the lead and Carter Fink got a put back with 1:20 to go to give the Indians a 73 – 70 lead. Waynesboro's three pointer tied the score then Evan Braun got a neat tip in to give Fort a 75 – 73 lead. A free throw by the home team made it Fort 75, Waynesboro 74 at the end of the third period.

Tripp bombed in a three pointer to give Fort a four point lead but Waynesboro kept clawing back, tying the game at 78's with 6:37 to go. Carter Fink converted a layup plus he was fouled on the play. His foul shot gave Fort a 83 – 80 lead but Waynesboro hit two more jumpers to take their last lead of the game at 84 – 83 with 5:19 to go. Gio then took over, scoring on three consecutive drives into the paint. Carter Fink's deuce pushed the Indians' lead back to eight at 92 – 84. Jasigh then hit two free throws. Fort led 93 – 88 with 3:38 to go then Sam put the nail in Waynesboro's coffin with his tenth and final three pointer, making it 96 – 88 with 2:57 to go. After Waynesboro closed to 96 – 89, Sam was fouled attempting a three pointer. He made all three foul shots giving Fort a ten point lead with 2:47 to go, 99 – 89. Bradley Hebb then scored on a drive and one of two free throws to push the Indians over the century mark for the second game in a row. Gio's deuce made it 104 – 89. Gus finished Fort's scoring with a free throw. The final was 105 – 95.

As in the previous game, Fort scored a lot but still left lots of room on the table for improvement. From the free throw line, they made only 12 of 29 attempts. And their porous defense allowed Waynesboro to score many layups. But thanks to the big nights from Sam and Gio, who together scored 64 of the 105 points, Fort was able to take home its second straight Shenandoah District win. Fort's guards had fewer turnovers than they have had in some previous games but still will need to tighten their ball handling when they play stiffer competition.

Fort returns home on Friday night with a Shenandoah District game against Buffalo Gap.

Grandfather's note: Gus did get to play some in each quarter including the last minute of the fourth quarter after Fort had built up a 14 point lead. He is still very discouraged from his lack of playing time, especially since he does well when he is on the court. In tonight's game, he had a steal, a nice assist, several offensive rebounds, and outscored five of his teammates despite getting much less playing time than the others. I understand his frustration. I don't believe his coaches see what I see when I watch these games. I'm not sure what they see....

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	11	1	2-4	27
Bradley Hebb	1	0	1-2	3
Jasigh Ransome	1	1	2-4	7
Carter Fink	5	0	3-8	13
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	2	10	3-4	37
Austin Metz	0	1	0-0	3
Evan Braun	1	0	0-3	2
Rhylan Martin	1	0	0-0	2
Del Ray Jones	0	0	0-0	0
Tripp Hanger	1	1	0-0	5
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-2	0
Gus Gutshall	1	0	1-2	3
Carter Berry	0	1	0-0	3
TOTAL	24	15	12-29	105

The following short article appeared in the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Garber Drops 37, Indians Hit Century Mark In Win

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Jan 11, 2024

It was a career night for Sam Garber and one he won't forget anytime soon.

The standout senior forward hit 10 3-pointers and finished with 37 points — both career highs — as Fort Defiance hit the century mark once again while earning a thrilling 105-95 victory at Waynesboro in Shenandoah District boys basketball action on Wednesday.

Sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz continued his strong play as of late, adding 27 points of his own for the Indians, while senior forward Carter Fink also hit double digits with 13 points.

Haden Morris, a sophomore, scored a career-high 30 points for the Little Giants, while junior Zevion Robinson added 22 points, and junior wing Jackson Darden finished with 14.

Fort (5-6, 2-0 Shenandoah) returns home Friday against Buffalo Gap (6-7, 0-3 Shenandoah), while Waynesboro (1-12, 0-4 Shenandoah) hits the road to take on Riverheads (4-9, 0-3 Shenandoah).

Fort Defiance 31 23 21 30 — 105
Waynesboro 24 22 28 21 — 95

Game 12: Fort Defiance 97, Buffalo Gap 64

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

by Joe Hill

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

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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

Game 13: Staunton 106, Fort Defiance 80

Staunton races past defenseless Fort Defiance 106 - 80

by Joe Hill

The Staunton Storm stormed past the Fort Defiance Indians on January 18 in the Paul Hatcher Gym, 106 – 80. Each team came into the game with a 3 – 0 record in the Shenandoah District but Staunton took advantage of numerous turnovers, poor shooting, and lack of defense on Fort's part to blast the Indians in a game that was postponed for two consecutive nights due to inclement weather. The game was close for the first 15 minutes of play but with the Storm hanging onto a 38 – 37 lead with one minute to go in the first half, the home team scored eight unanswered points to take a commanding 46 – 37 lead at halftime. Then they trumped that run with a 38 point third quarter to put the game out of reach. With the win, Staunton's record is now 7 – 6, 4 – 0 while Fort Defiance dropped to 6 – 7, 3 – 1.

In the first quarter, neither team shot well and the lead changed hands numerous times. Carter Fink opened the scoring on an assist from Gio Armendariz Cruz to give Fort a 2 – 0 lead. After Staunton took a 3 – 2 lead on a field goal and foul shot, Carter again scored on a put back to make it 4 – 3. Staunton answered with a layup then Jasigh Ransome and Evan Braun each hit three pointers to give Fort a 10 – 5 lead with 2:14 to go in the quarter. Staunton scored on its next two possessions to get within one but Del Ray Jones hit a three pointer to give Fort a 13 – 9 lead. Unfortunately for the Indians, the Storm would score the next eight points to take a 17 – 13 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Neither of Fort's two leading scorers, Gio and Sam Garber, scored in the first quarter but Sam finally connected on a three to start the second quarter. After a Staunton deuce, Tripp Hanger hit one of two free throws to make the score 19 – 17 in favor of SHS with 7:04 to go in the period. Staunton got a field goal to push their lead to four but Tripp answered with two consecutive threes, giving FDHS a 23 – 21 lead with 4:41 to go. Sam's bucket gave Fort a 25 – 21 advantage. After a Staunton field goal, Carter Fink again scored in the paint then took a nice pass from Del Ray and scored again, giving Fort a 29 – 25 lead. Staunton then made a nine point run, taking the lead at 30 – 29 with 2:40 to go then extending the lead to 34 – 29 with 2:06 to go. They would continue to lead the rest of the game. Gio finally got on the board with a deuce to make it 34 – 31. After a Staunton score, Del Ray popped in two more three pointers sandwiched around a Staunton basket to make the score 38 – 37 with a minute to go. As they did in the first quarter, Staunton then scored eight consecutive points, aided by some bad turnovers by the Fort guards, to take a 46 – 37 lead at the half. Not helping Fort's cause in the half was that they made only one of seven free throws attempted.

Fort's defense was nowhere to be found in the third quarter. Staunton easily broke Fort's press, got defensive rebounds and found that Fort had no one back to defend, and forced the Indians into numerous turnovers as they put 38 points on the board in the quarter, none of which came on three pointers. Fort got a two pointer and a free throw from Gio, a three plus two free throws by Tripp, a basket in the paint by Carter Berry, two triples and four free throws from Sam, and a free throw from Jasigh, Carter Fink, and Jasigh to make the score 84 – 60 after three quarters. Ordinarily, 23 points in a quarter would be fine but not when you give up 38.

Fort got the lead down to 19 a few times in the fourth quarter but the game was clearly out of reach by that time. Sam made 3 three pointers in the quarter. Fort also got three baskets by Carter Berry, one by Austin Metz, one by Gus Gutshall, and a free throw by Rhylan Martin. Staunton scored 100 with 1:03 to go then added two three pointers to make the final score Staunton 106, Fort Defiance 80.

Sam led the Indians with 24 points but he did not have a good night shooting. Gio had his worst night of the season and only managed 5 points. Tripp had 12, Carter Fink 9, Del Ray 9, and Carter Berry 8 for the Indians. As it has been all season, the Indians play throughout the game was very selfish with players looking for their own shots instead of for the open teammate. Meanwhile, Staunton ran and passed and played tight defense all night to humble the Indians. Fort Defiance was without Bradley Hebb and Jalen Alexander for the game.

Fort's free throw shooting is abysmal. Tonight it was 12 of 27. For the season they are making only 51% of their foul shots. But do the players shoot any free throws during warm ups or at halftime? No, all they do the entire time is shoot from beyond the arc.

Grandfather's note: As usual, Gus played much less than his teammates. In the second quarter he played a grand total of 20 seconds. He had a nice put back in the fourth quarter and snared a rebound earlier in the game. Thanks to his teammates' selfish style of play, the only way he ever touches the ball is if he gets a rebound. I sat among other players' parents tonight who were as disgusted as I am with the style of play the boys are being taught to play. What I observe is that it seems to be quite OK to make frequent turnovers, miss the majority of your shots, and play no defense as long as you can launch a three point shot without having to pass the ball. It is hard to watch and remain calm.



Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	2	0	1-4	5
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	0	1	2-4	5
Carter Fink	4	0	1-3	9
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	6	4-4	24
Austin Metz	1	0	0-2	2
Evan Braun	0	1	0-0	3
Rhylan Martin	0	0	1-2	1
Del Ray Jones	0	3	0-0	9
Tripp Hanger	0	3	3-6	12
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	4	0	0-2	8
TOTAL	13	14	12-27	80

The following short article appeared in the Staunton News Leader:

Staunton head coach Terrell Mickens recorded his 100th career victory for the Storm in his team's 106-80 win over Fort Defiance Thursday.

Durrell Hamilton led six Staunton players in double figures with 24 points in the win. Manny Chapman added 15 points, while Ky'Ree Scott finished with 14 and Michael Reed had 12 in the victory. Staunton's Joaquin Bell and Jack Jones both had 10.

Staunton is now 7-6 overall and 4-0 in the district. Fort is now 6-7 and 3-1 in district play.

Sam Garber led Fort Defiance with 24 points in the loss. Tripp Hanger had 12 for Fort.



Game 14: Fort Defiance 90, Wilson 69

Fort Defiance swats Hornets 90 - 69

by Joe Hill

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 Allegheny 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 News Leader:

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 Daily News Record:

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 wing 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.



Game 15: Alleghany 88, Fort Defiance 65

Alleghany pummels Fort Defiance 88 - 65

by Joe Hill

The Alleghany Cougars built a 25 point lead by halftime and coasted to a dominating 88 – 65 win over the Fort Defiance Indians held at Rockbridge High School in the last game of the 10th annual Rock the Ribbon Roundball Shootout on January 27. AHS used a 14 – 0 run beginning with 1:21 to go in the first quarter and extending until the middle of the second quarter to extend their record to 13 -5 for the year. Fort fell to 7 – 8 and hopes to get back on track with three Shenandoah District games in the coming week against Riverheads, Stuarts Draft, and Waynesboro.

Fort got off to a fine start, going up 7 – 0 in the first two minutes on a bucket by Trey Miller with an assist to Jaylen Alexander, a three pointer from Rhylan Martin, and a tip-in by Carter Berry. It didn't take the Cougars long to tie the score before Jalen got a basket in the paint to make it 9 – 7, Fort's last lead of the night. The Indians could only manage a drive by Gio Armendariz Cruz while Alleghany scored ten points to go up 17 – 11. Tripp Hanger hit a three pointer before Alleghany went ahead 20 – 14. Gio then got a drive to go and was fouled. His free throw pulled Fort within three at 20 – 17 but then the Indians went stone cold. The quarter ended with a 24 – 17 lead for the Cougars and they extended their lead to 34 – 17 before the Indians would score midway through the second quarter.

Tripp's three finally broke the ice for Fort but the rest of the quarter wasn't good. Jasigh Ransome hit two free throws and Gio had a layup plus two free throws. Meanwhile, Alleghany built up a huge lead, 51 – 26 at the half.

Notice that Sam Garber's name hasn't been mentioned in this story. Sam had the worst night of his career, missing well over a dozen field goals and scoring only three free throws for the night. The Indians were also playing without Carter Fink who had missed the bus and Bradley Hebb who remains injured.

The second half was a stalemate as Alleghany was never threatened. The game was testy at times with tempers flaring. Fort's first point in the second half came on a technical foul shot by Sam. In the third quarter, Fort also got a free throw from Gus Gutshall, a layup on an out-of-bounds play by Carter Berry, a basket in close by Gio, two more free throws by Sam plus one for Jasigh and one for Jalen after a basket. Fort ended the quarter with two free throws by Gio, two by Carter Berry, and field goals by Trey, Tripp, and Rhylan. The score after three periods was 74 – 48.

Fort's fourth quarter was no better. Del Ray Jones hit a three pointer, Jaylen a foul shot, Evan Braun a basket in the lane, and a three point play by Gio but the score remained 86 – 57 midway through the quarter. Rhylan's basket, Tripp's second three pointer, Jalen's foul shot, and Gio's basket near the buzzer finished the scoring for FDHS. The final was Alleghany 88, Fort Defiance 65.

Gio led the Indians with 18 points and was named to the All-Tournament team. Tripp added 11.

Grandfather's note: The Fort season has been a strange one with only games against Turner Ashby being close. No other game has finished with less than a ten point difference either in winning or losing. Has Fort improved? I'd say no. The free throw shooting has improved somewhat but the season average is still only 55%. Passing certainly has not. There were times in this game when many Fort fans, not including me, yelled at Gio to pass the ball since his eyes only appear to see the rim when he drives. Shooting has not improved; a total of nine three point baskets have been made in the last two games despite dozens of attempts. Defense shows no improvement; the average opponent scores over 84 points per game against FDHS. Team play is absent; tonight, like nearly all previous games, the only way Gus touched the basketball was when he got a rebound.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	6	0	6-6	18
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	0	0	3-4	3
Carter Fink	0	0	0-0	0
Trey Miller	2	0	0-0	4
Sam Garber	0	0	3-4	3
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	1	0	0-0	2
Rhylan Martin	2	1	0-0	7
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	1	3	0-0	11
Jalen Alexander	2	0	3-5	7
Gus Gutshall	0	0	1-4	1
Carter Berry	2	0	2-2	6
TOTAL	16	5	18-25	65

Game 16: Fort Defiance 86, Riverheads 64

Fort Defiance Indians outduel Riverheads Gladiators 86 - 64

by Joe Hill

The Fort Defiance Indians led the entire way in handing the Riverheads Gladiators their ninth consecutive loss of the season, 86 – 64, at the Riverheads Gym on January 30. The win evens Fort's overall record for the season at 8 – 8, 5 – 1 in the Shenandoah District, and sets up an important Shenandoah District game this Thursday against the 14 – 3 Stuarts Draft Cougars who have won eleven games in a row and are tied with Staunton in the District with a 7 – 0 record.

Fort opened up an early lead thanks to a 3 pointer by Ryland Martin, a put back by Carter Fink, and a triple from Del Ray Jones to run out to a 8 – 2 lead in the first quarter. Riverheads' three pointer made it 8 – 5 then Carter F. again scored in close for the Indians. Sam Garber added two free throws and Jasigh Ransome added a free throw and a driving layup to make it 15 – 7 with 4:09 to go in the quarter. Riverheads scored the next six points until Gio Armendariz Cruz hit a three and added a free throw to make the score 19 – 15 with 2:00 to go. Riverheads got within two at 19 – 17 then Gio scored on a pass from Tripp Hanger to make it 21 – 17. Gus Gutshall then scored on two consecutive possessions in the paint for the Indians. Tripp followed with another three pointer and, as time expired, Gio fired in a trey to give the Indians a comfortable 29 – 17 lead after one quarter.

For the next two quarters, Riverheads stayed within striking distance but never caught up. Rhylan again bombed in a three pointer to open the second quarter. Gio's floater in the lane made it 34 – 19 with 7:06 to go. Gus then grabbed an offensive rebound and scored in close. Both teams then went cold until Tripp's bucket in the lane gave Fort a 38 – 24 lead. Austin Metz got a basket to fall giving the Indians a 40 – 29 lead but Riverheads kept chipping their way back. Fort managed a free throw from Carter F. but meanwhile Riverheads scored six points to make it 41 – 35. Evan Braun then popped in a three pointer and Rhylan made a free throw which left the score at 45 – 36 at the half.

The third quarter was nothing to brag about for either team. Fort managed only 14 points in the quarter while Riverheads scored 11. Fort's scores came on a put back by Carter F., a free throw and layup by Gio, Sam's only field goal of the game, another three pointer by Tripp, free throws by Austin and Gus, and a layup by Rhylan.

Fort finished the game with a 27 point fourth quarter. During this quarter, Gio scored 11 points including two three pointers. Evan and Jalen each scored in the lane, Carter F. made a free throw and a field goal, Jasigh got two on an offensive rebound plus a three pointer, Rhylan made a foul shot, then Carter Berry closed the scoring with a three pointer on a kick out from Gus.

Gio led the FDHS scoring with 23. Carter Fink dropped in 10 as did Rhylan. Jasigh and Tripp each had eight and Gus scored seven. Twelve Indians scored. Sam's scoring slump continued. He made only one field goal and sat out early on with foul trouble. J. Crawford led Riverheads with 17.

Grandfather's note: I hope by the end of the season I'll go home feeling really good about a Fort game. I'm 0 – 16 so far. Tonight, Fort won handily but, in reality, Riverheads was a very weak opponent whose record is now 4 – 15, 0 – 10. The Indians only made 12 of 28 free throws tonight. There were the usual plethora of turnovers and selfish players not seeing open teammates. Plus, I continue to be upset over Gus' lack of playing time. Tonight, for example, he was 3 – 4 from the field, outscored seven of his teammates, had several rebounds, and committed zero turnovers. His reward—he played two 37 second spurts in the fourth quarter. His playing time is the least on the team yet I'll wager he has the highest field goal shooting percentage of anyone, the fewest turnovers, and more than his share of rebounds and assists. He does need to improve his free throw shooting; for the season he's made only 41% of his foul shots but even that statistic is better than four of his teammates'. I know that my words are those of a biased grandfather but the statistics speak for themselves. Is anyone looking at them besides me?

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	4	4	3-6	23
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	2	1	1-6	8
Carter Fink	4	0	2-5	10
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	0	2-2	4
Austin Metz	1	0	1-2	3
Evan Braun	1	1	0-0	5
Rhylan Martin	1	2	2-4	10
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	1	2	0-0	8
Jalen Alexander	1	0	0-0	2
Gus Gutshall	3	0	1-3	7
Carter Berry	0	1	0-0	3
TOTAL	19	12	12-28	86

Game 17: Stuarts Draft 84, Fort Defiance 68

Stuarts Draft mauls Fort Defiance 84 – 68

by Joe Hill

In an important Shenandoah District game, the Stuarts Draft Cougars dominated the Fort Defiance Indians 84 – 68 on February 1 in the Don Landes Gym. The Cougars came into the Fort gym riding an 11 game winning streak and were tied with Staunton for first place in the Shenandoah District. The win improved their record to 15 – 3 overall, 8 – 0 in the District. Fort's record fell to 8 – 9, 5 – 2. The Cougars jumped out to a 10 – 0 lead and the home team never caught up. Fort was clearly outplayed and outcoached in a game marred by the Indians' poor shooting, poor shot selection, incredibly selfish play, and little defense.

The Cougars had Fort pinned down in the start of the game, blowing out to a 10 – 0 lead before Carter Fink got a basket in the lane with 4:30 to go. Del Ray Jones hit a three and Tripp Hanger followed with the first of his four three pointers to get the Indians within four at 12 – 8. After a SDHS goal, Sam Garber hit one of two free throws but Draft increased the lead to 16 – 9 before Carter Berry's hook in the lane fell to make it SDHS 16, FDHS 11 after one period.

Draft hit two free throws to go up 18 – 11 then Gio scored on a drive for Fort. He then was fouled on two drives in the lane and hit all four free throws but Draft still maintained its lead at 25 – 17. Carter Fink's dunk got the home crowd up, and Sam's three pointer gave hope to the home team with the score Draft 25, Fort 22. The Cougars scored the next four points, however, until Tripp hit another three. Draft took a ten point lead, 35 – 25, before Evan Braun popped in a triple with just under three minutes to go in the half. Draft scored again to take a 37 – 28 lead. Fort finally got things going in the last minute as Carter F. made a free throw, then got a three point play the old fashioned way. Sam hit two more free throws so the Stuarts Draft lead at halftime was only 3, 37 – 34.

The first half was not a pretty one for Fort. Gio had many, many drives in which he missed a wild shot or turned it over. Sam's shooting was miserable; he had only one field goal in the half but he did have two good defensive blocks on Draft shots. But at least Fort stayed in striking distance and hopes were that the second half would go the Indians' way.

It did not. Stuarts Draft quickly turned the lead to nine points by scoring the first six points of the second half. Gio finally got a drive to drop but those were the only points Fort would score in the first three minutes of the half. He scored again to make the score 47 – 38 and hit two foul shots as Fort crept closer at 48 – 40. Draft responded a bucket to push their lead to ten before Tripp hit his third three pointer on a nice kick-out from Gus Gutshall. Gio got a drive and a free throw, Sam added a free throw, and Jasigh Ransome scored on a drive in the lane but Draft still held a 58 – 49 lead after three periods.

Draft held a 61 – 51 lead with 5:51 left in the game after Sam hit his last basket of the game. Draft's lead swelled to 63 – 51 before Gio again scored. Carter Fink banked in a three pointer to make it 65 – 56 but Draft kept up the pace, going up 67 – 56. Tripp's final trey made it 67 – 59 with three minutes to go.

Draft went up 71 – 64 after Gio had a field goal and a three pointer with 2:28 to go. Down the stretch, Draft held the ball well and Fort was forced to foul. The only remaining points for Fort were two free throws by Gio and a drive by Jasigh. Meanwhile, Draft hit its free throws in route to a 84 – 68 victory.

Gio led Fort with 24 points but he actually had a very poor game. He shot time after time and had not only fans yelling at him to pass but even a teammate was heard doing the same. It seemed like it was one versus nine on the court many times. Sam’s shooting was off for the third game in a row; he finished with only nine points. Tripp had a decent night shooting, hitting four three’s, and Carter Fink pitched in 11. Unlike previous games, only seven players scored for FDHS.

Draft had four players in double digits led by D. Jenkins with 25. Fort’s defense frequently has their big players away from the goal and Jenkins had his way in the lane against Fort’s guards.

Fort is back in action tomorrow night against Waynesboro.

Grandfather’s note: I don’t know what I can say that I haven’t said previously because nothing has changed. Gus played ten seconds in the fourth quarter. TEN SECONDS! He played an average of two minutes in each of the other quarters despite the fact that neither Bradley nor Rhylan Martin were on the bench. The coaches seem willing to put up with players who shoot every time they touch the ball, whether it is a good shot or not. Turnovers go unpunished and frequently their defense has three players chasing the ball leaving the opponent with easy opportunities to score.

I’ve complained before about the Fort warm-up routine. Tonight I counted. As a team they shot 196 three point shots prior to the game and only 5 free throws (only two players even attempted foul shots). This is a team that is making only 55% of its free throws for the year. Is it any wonder? And the 196 practice attempts apparently didn’t improve their accuracy as they missed shot after shot during the game from beyond the arc.

I think that what bothers me most about this year’s Fort team is that they all wear the same uniforms but are not a team. Players on a good team look for each other. They have the attitude “How can we best score?” not “How can I get up a shot?” They play a cohesive defense and adjust their offense and defense depending on the opponent. They keep their eyes on the clock and the score. They highly value assists, and know that turnovers, bad shots, or negligent defense will earn them a place on the bench. Unfortunately, none of these characteristics have I noticed on the 2023 – 24 FDHS team. I’ve played and watched basketball for over sixty years now; this year has been perhaps the hardest team for me to enjoy watching. I will continue to support Gus in every way I can and feel terrible that he has to play in such a helter skelter, selfish system. I’m really proud of him for keeping his head up and trying hard.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	6	1	9-11	24
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	2	0	0-0	4
Carter Fink	3	1	2-5	11
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	1	4-5	9
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	1	0-0	3
Rhylan Martin	0	0	0-0	0
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	0	4	0-0	12
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Berry	1	0	0-0	2
TOTAL	13	9	15-21	68

The following article appeared in the Harrisonburg Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Cougars Pick Up 12th Consecutive Win

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Feb 2, 2024

Stuarts Draft slowly pulled away in the second half, gradually increasing the lead before eventually sealing the deal on an 84-68 Shenandoah District boys basketball victory over Fort Defiance inside Don Landes Gymnasium on Thursday.

The victory marked the 12th straight for the Cougars and was the program's first game against longtime former head coach Mike Gale, who is now in his first season coaching the Indians after previous stints as the FDHS girls coach and the Rockbridge County boys coach over the years.

The game also set up Friday's massive showdown between Draft and Staunton, which both entered that meeting with unbeaten district records.

Once again leading the way for the Cougars was 6-foot-4 junior big man Donovan Jenkins, who scored a game-high 25 points for the visitors.

Sophomore guard Derrick Moore also hit double digits in the scoring column for Draft with 15 points, while junior guard Landon Graber finished with 14 and senior center Izaiyah Ale Bell chipped in with 10.

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Harley Frame, a senior wing, added eight points in the victory for the Cougars, while freshman guard Ja'Saun Kier-Brown finished with six.

Meanwhile for Fort, sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz continued his strong play of late pouring in a team-high 24 points.

Sophomore guard Tripp Hanger hit four 3-pointers to finish with 12 points for the Indians, while senior forward Carter Fink hit double digits with 11.

Sam Garber, the leading scorer this season for Fort, finished with nine.

Both teams returned to action Friday with the Indians (8-9, 5-2 Shenandoah) hosting Waynesboro (2-16, 1-8 Shenandoah), while Draft (15-3, 8-0 Shenandoah) took on Staunton (11-6, 7-0 Shenandoah) at home.

Stuarts Draft 16 21 21 26 — 84
Fort Defiance 11 23 15 19 — 68

STUARTS DRAFT (15-3) — D. Diggs 0 0-0 0, J. Kier-Brown 1 4-4 6, J. Diggs 0 0-0 0, H. Frame 4 0-0 8, T. Cote 1 0-0 2, R. Ramsey 0 4-4 4, L.Graber 6 2-2 14, D. Moore 4 7-8 15, D. Jenkins 10 5-9 25, I. Ale Bell 5 0-1 10. Totals 22-28 84.

FORT DEFIANCE (8-9) — G. Armendariz Cruz 7 9-11 24, J. Ransome 2 0-0 4, C. Fink 4 2-3 11, T. Miller 0 0-0 0, S. Garber 2 4-6 9, A. Metz 0 0-0 0, E. Braun 1 0-0 3, D. Jones 1 0-0 3, T. Hanger 4 0-0 12, J. Alexander 0 0-0 0, G. Gutshall 0 0-0 0, C. Berry 1 0-0 2. Totals 22 15-20 68.

3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 9 (T. Hanger 4, G. Armendariz Cruz, C. Fink, S. Garber, E. Braun, D. Jones).



Game 18: Fort Defiance 91, Waynesboro 80

Fort Defiance wears down Waynesboro 91 - 80

by Joe Hill

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:

High School Boys Basketball Armendariz Cruz Pours In 31, Fort Wins

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Feb 3, 2024

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.

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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.

Waynesboro 20 17 14 29 — 80
Fort Defiance 13 22 21 35 — 91



Game 19: Fort Defiance 94, Buffalo Gap 70

Fort Defiance batters Buffalo Gap 94 - 70

by Joe Hill

The Fort Defiance Indians jumped out to a comfortable 23 point lead at the half and held off a late Buffalo Gap rally to beat the Bison 94 – 70 in the Buffalo Gap gym on February 6. The win improved the Indians' record to 10 – 9, 7 – 2 in the Shenandoah District. Gap fell to 8 – 12, 2 – 9.

The Indians made 15 three point baskets in the game and it was four fourth quarter threes that repelled the home team after BGHS had narrowed Fort's lead to just eleven with 6:05 to go in the game. Fort made four consecutive three pointers at that point to put the game out of reach. Shooting from beyond the arc was inconsistent for the Indians; they made 15 but took 49 attempts in the game. They were 0 – 12 in the third quarter.

Sam Garber opened the game with a triple from the top of the key. Gap responded with two jumpers to take their only lead of the game at 4 – 3. Rhylan Martin made a three for FDHS then Sam got two in the lane to put Fort back on top 8 – 4 with 6:08 left in the quarter. After a Buffalo Gap score, Gio Armendariz Cruz scored in the lane then Austin Metz drilled home a three pointer to make it 13 – 6. After two BGHS free throws, Sam scored on a drive then Carter Fink got two on a put back. Gap scored the next three points. Gus Gutshall then got on the scoring board with a nice jumper in the lane after he had snared an offensive rebound. Sam's second three of the game gave Fort a double digit lead at 22 – 11 with 2:00 left. Tripp Hanger's two improved the lead to 24 – 11 but Gap scored the final five points of the quarter which ended at 24 – 16 in favor of the visitors.

The second quarter saw a 33 point outburst by Fort Defiance. Carter Fink scored, was fouled, and made his free throw to open the quarter. Rhylan hit another trey to make it 30 – 18. Carter F. then took a nice pass from Austin and, on the next possession, made one of two free throws to extend the lead to 33 – 18. Again Carter was in the right place with an offensive rebound and score to make it 35 – 18 with 5:26 to go in the quarter. Three point baskets were then scored by Del Ray Jones, Sam, and Tripp to give the Indians a 46 – 22 lead with 3:05 to go. Gio got another basket in the lane then Del Ray made his second three pointer of the quarter to give FDHS a 51 – 23 lead, their largest of the night. Gus made one of two free throws before Sam scored five more, one on a three pointer and one on a drive. Gap scored the final four points of the half which ended at 57 – 34 in favor of the Indians.

Fort's third quarter was very unproductive. The team had shot well in the first half but couldn't get a three pointer to drop the entire quarter, going 0 – 12. After a BGHS basket to open the half, Sam got two on a put back. Carter Fink got another old-fashioned three point play so Fort held a 62 – 39 lead with 4:34 to go. Sam and Carter each got field goals to push the lead to 66 – 42. After Gap scored, Gio scored again in the lane to make it 68 – 44. Fort went cold for the next couple of minutes while Gap narrowed the lead to 68 – 51 before Sam's field goal gave Fort a 70 – 51 lead at the end of the third quarter.

You would think that a nineteen point lead would be safe going into the fourth quarter, but the way Fort’s frenetic offense and sometimes inept defense is, no lead is secure. Sure enough, after Gus’ free throw gave Fort a 71 – 53 lead with 7:22 left in the game, Buffalo Gap started its comeback. They scored the next seven points to pull with eleven at 71 – 60 with just over six minutes left. Gio’s two pushed the lead back to thirteen but only momentarily as Gap scored on its next possession, making it 73 – 62 with 6:05 to go. Fort’s three point shooters then got hot again, with triples by Tripp, Del Ray, Carter Berry, and Tripp again gave Fort a commanding 85 – 66 lead. Sam’s two free throws made it 87 – 68 with 2:38 to go. Down the stretch, Jasigh Ransome had two jumpers in the paint and Rhylan hit his third trey to make the final 94 – 70.

Fort played without Bradley Hebb and Trey Miller, both nursing injuries. Fort has three tough games remaining: Staunton, Stuarts Draft, and Wilson. The Staunton game this coming Friday will be Senior Night for the Indians as the last two games are both away games.

Sam led Fort’s scoring with 28. Carter had 15 and Tripp 11. K. Fitzgerald had 20 for the Bison.

Grandfather’s note: Gus played sparingly, as always, but at least he did see action in all quarters tonight. He had a bunch of rebounds, zero turnovers, and four points. With the way Fort rotates five players at a time every minute or so of action, there are many times when he is on the court but doesn’t touch the ball. As I’ve said way too many times this year, in order for him to touch the ball on offense he has to get a rebound from a teammate’s missed shot. His teammates give him plenty of opportunities for offensive rebounds since their shot making ability is quite subpar. He seemed to be happy after the game tonight and that is what is most important.

Fort’s Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	4	0	0-0	8
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Jasigh Ransome	2	0	0-2	4
Carter Fink	6	0	3-4	15
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	7	4	2-2	28
Austin Metz	0	1	0-0	3
Evan Braun	0	0	0-0	0
Rhylan Martin	0	3	0-0	9
Del Ray Jones	0	3	0-0	9
Tripp Hanger	1	3	0-0	11
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	1	0	2-4	4
Carter Berry	0	1	0-0	3
TOTAL	21	15	7-12	94

Game 20: Staunton 100, Fort Defiance 74

Staunton storms past Fort Defiance 100 - 74

by Joe Hill

Fort Defiance played a great second quarter against Staunton on February 9 in the Don Landes Gym, outscoring the Storm 23 – 13. Unfortunately, it takes four good quarters to beat a team like Staunton. Staunton blew the homestanding Indians away 100 – 74.

It was senior night at Fort Defiance as five of the Indians (Sam Garber, Carter Fink, Del Ray Jones, Jaden Alexander, and Austin Metz) played their last regular season home game in the Don Landes Gym. Unfortunately, the opponent was Staunton who came into the game undefeated in Shenandoah District play having already sewn up the District Championship. The result was not pretty for the Indians. The loss left Fort with a 10 – 10 overall record, 7 – 3 in the District. Staunton improved to 15 – 6, 11 – 0.

Staunton opened with three quick scores by breaking Fort's press to go up 6 – 0 before Sam Garber banged home a three pointer from the corner. The Storm increased its lead to 12 – 3 before Evan Braun got two for the Indians. After Staunton went up 16 – 5, Jasigh Ransome made two free throws. Gio Armendariz Cruz scored on a drive to make it 16 – 9. After a Staunton score, Carter Fink hit a jumper in the lane then Bradley Hebb, playing for the first time in a month, drove for a basket to make it 18 – 13. Staunton broke the press again to go up 20 – 13 with 3:08 to go in the quarter then went on a 6 – 0 run to go up 26 – 13 before Gio turned an offensive rebound into two points. Staunton outscored the Indians 8 – 1 in the final two minutes of the quarter; all Fort could muster was a free throw by Jasigh.

The second quarter was like a different ball game from the other three. Fort shot better, took only one three point shot, distributed the ball better, turned it over fewer times, and played decent defense. Staunton opened the scoring to go up 36 – 16 then back-to-back field goals by Carter F. and Jasigh made it 36 – 20. Staunton made two free throws and a field goal to increase their lead to twenty, 40 – 20, and it looked like a typical Staunton blowout was in the works. However, Fort clawed back. Carter Berry made a free throw, as did Carter Fink, and Gio drove for two to narrow the lead to 40 – 24. After a Staunton score, Carter F. again scored in the paint. Staunton scored again to make it 44 – 26 then Fort made its move. Gio hit two free throws, Gus Gutshall scored in close after snaring an offensive rebound, Sam hit another three pointer from deep in the corner, and Tripp Hanger got two off a put back. Fort was back in the game at 44 – 35. Staunton hit a three pointer then Carter Fink and Evan each made a pair of free throws, putting the home team only behind by eight, 47 – 39, at the half.

Ah, if FDHS could only have played that way the rest of the game. In the third quarter Fort returned to its bad habits of turning the ball over and not getting back on defense fast enough. Staunton outscored the Indians 29 – 15. Fort got three pointers from Tripp and Jasigh and Tripp made a rare four point play after being fouled while swishing a trey. But the only other points the Indians could get were a jumper by Sam, a free throw by Gio, and a two pointer by Rhylan Martin. The third quarter ended at 76 – 54 in favor of the visitors.

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Staunton won the fourth quarter as well, 24 – 20, and reached the century mark in the last minute on two foul shots. Fort’s scoring in the quarter came from Sam, who had a three pointer, Jasigh, who had a field goal, Carter Fink with a score in the paint, Gio on a drive, another three pointer by Tripp, a trey by Del Ray Jones, a layup by Rhylan, two foul shots by Sam, and a free throw by Jasigh. Fort never got closer than 20 in the quarter.

Five Indians scored in double figures led by Sam with 13. Tripp had 12 while Gio, Jasigh, and Carter F. each had 11. Staunton was led by Manny Chapman with 29.

Fort’s last two games against Stuarts Draft and Wilson Memorial will determine if the Indians earn a spot in the Region 2 tournament. Both games are away next week.

Grandfather’s note: Gus played a minute or so in each quarter. As he has done all season, he got some rebounds, scored, and hustled. What more could you ask? I’m proud of him.

Fort’s Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	4	0	3-4	11
Bradley Hebb	1	0	0-0	2
Jasigh Ransome	2	1	4-6	11
Carter Fink	4	0	3-4	11
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	3	2-3	13
Austin Metz	0	0	0-2	0
Evan Braun	1	0	2-2	4
Rhylan Martin	2	0	0-0	4
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	1	3	1-1	11
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-2	0
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-0	2
Carter Berry	0	0	1-2	1
TOTAL	17	8	16-26	74

The following article appeared in the Staunton News Leader:

Chapman's 30 leads Staunton boys

High school sports

PATRICK HITE Staunton News Leader



Staunton at Fort Defiance, boys basketball photos, Friday, Feb. 9

Staunton played at Fort Defiance Friday, Feb. 9 in a Shenandoah District boys basketball game

FORT DEFIANCE — It's now 10 in a row for **Staunton** boys basketball, which hasn't lost in a month. The Storm blew into **Fort Defiance** Friday night, overwhelming Fort 100-73 to remain unbeaten in Shenandoah District play.

Manny Chapman led Staunton with 30 points as the Storm improved to 15-6 overall and a league best 11-0 in the Shenandoah District with one game remaining Monday.

Staunton finished a brutal week that saw it face the second-, third- and fourth-place teams in the district, winning all three games. Fort, because of its uptempo style, was a tough team to face last after playing Wilson Memorial and Stuarts Draft earlier in the week.

"It's hard to keep that energy coming in here," Jack Jones said about Fort. "They run you the whole time and they do a good job of it. At the end of the day it's all mental and we're so deep. We have eight guards that can compete with the best of the best."

Staunton coach Terrell Mickens said you can't really prepare for Fort.

"It's so hard to simulate what they do and what (Mike Gale) does so well as a coach with that system," Mickens said. "You've basically got to take care of the basketball, push it ahead and shoot layups. If you get in a 3-point contest with them you're going to lose."

Staunton jumped out to a 34-16 lead after the first quarter, but Fort rallied in the second to get back within eight at the halftime break. After Chapman's 3-pointer gave Staunton a 12-point lead with 1:11 left, Carter Fink and Evan Braun hit two free throws each to cut Staunton's lead to 47-39.

Staunton, and specifically Chapman, answered the call in the third quarter. Chapman hit a 3-pointer, a pair of layups and an assist — from a sitting position on the floor — to help the Storm stretch its lead to 13 midway through the third. Chapman scored 14 points — nearly half of his total for the game — in the third and Staunton led 76-54 heading to the final quarter.

"We came in the first quarter with a lot of good energy but the second quarter it kind of dropped," Chapman said. "I told them coming out in the third quarter we needed to bring the same energy we had at the beginning of the game. That's what we did. I think I did a good job leading them through it."

Fort could never rally in the fourth. All that was left to answer was if Staunton could break triple digits. It did with 39 seconds left on a pair of free throws from Anthony Renne.

Jones had 18 and Durrell Hamilton added 16 in the win.

After playing Riverheads Monday, Staunton is off until next Friday when the Region 3C playoffs begin. Mickens said his team would be on the road, but the seedings aren't finalized yet. Three overtime losses didn't help Staunton this season, but the coach said his team is ready for the playoffs no matter where they play next week.

"I think we're playing pretty good," Mickens said. "Obviously you can get better. We just try to take it a game at a time. If we share the basketball we're going to be in every single game because we're going to play defense. Hopefully we continue that and guys stay healthy and try to get on a run here."

Jasigh Ransome led Fort Defiance with 14 points as Fort dropped to 10-10 overall, 7-3 in the district with games against Wilson Memorial and Stuarts Draft remaining.



Game 21: Fort Defiance 67, Stuarts Draft 65

Fort Defiance gets revenge on Stuarts Draft, 67 - 65

by Joe Hill

Tripp Hanger turned a one point deficit into a two point lead with 29.3 seconds to go with a long three point bomb to give the Fort Indians a 67 – 65 lead which they were able to hang onto in an important Shenandoah District game against Stuarts Draft on February 12 on the Cougars home court. With the win, Fort moved into second place in the district with a 8 – 3 record (11 – 10 overall) while Draft fell to 8 – 4 (15 – 7 overall). The game will likely have importance in the upcoming Region 2 tournament as both teams are in the region.

Gio Armandariz Cruz, who led the Indians with 22 points, tied the game at 63 – 63 with a floater in the lane with 2 minutes left. Sam Garber, who had an off night shooting, made one of two free throws to give Fort a 64 – 63 lead with 1:19 to go. After a Gio turnover, Draft went up 65 – 64 with 35 seconds left, setting up the stage for Tripp to bang home his winning three pointer. Both teams played in the last minute like neither wanted to win with multiple turnovers and missed shots. After a Stuarts Draft turnover with 17 seconds left, Fort promptly turned the ball back to Draft who had a chance to win it with a three pointer with 10 seconds to go but Harley Frame's shot rimmed out. Fort rebounded and was fouled but it was only the 4th foul on Draft in the quarter so Fort got the ball out of bounds again with 4.9 seconds to go and the Indians were able to hang on for the win.

Gio got the first two of the game on a drive. Gus Gutshall then hit one of two free throws. Meanwhile, Draft scored twice to go up 4 – 3. After the Cougars went up 6 – 3, Gio made another driving shot. Carter Fink scored a basket on a pass from Gio to pull the Indians within one at 8 – 7. Sam's driving layup gave Fort a brief 9 – 8 lead. Stuarts Draft scored the next four points before Gio got a three pointer to drop, tying the score at 12's with 2:12 to go in the quarter. From there, Gus took over, grabbing two offensive rebounds and putting the ball back in the basket each time. The five point quarter was one of the best of the season for Gus. After one, SDHS led 18 – 16.

After Draft went up 20 – 16 to start the second quarter, Sam made a three to get the Indians within one. Bradley Hebb drove for two and the Indians took a 21 – 20 lead. Gio's two free throws made it 23 - 20 with 4:32 to go. Draft came back with two free throws and a jumper to go up 24 – 23 with 2:52 to go. Sam's second three of the quarter made the see-saw game 26 – 24 in favor of Fort. After Draft tied the score, Jasigh Ransome hit one of two free throws. Sam followed that with his third three pointer of the quarter, giving FDHS a 30 – 26 lead. Draft scored to close to 30 – 28 then Rhylan Martin swished a long three pointer to make it 33 – 28. After Draft made a free throw, Fort had the ball and a four point lead with 28 seconds to go but failed to hold for the last shot of the half. It came back to bite the Indians as their missed shot turned into a SDHS rebound then a FDHS foul with 2.6 seconds which allowed the home team to make two free throws to close to 33 – 31 at the half.

Del Ray Jones' trey opened a 36 – 31 lead for Fort in the third. Stuarts Draft scored the next three points before Carter Fink turned an offensive rebound into two points. SDHS scored but Gio answered with another drive in the lane then he made one of two free throws with 4:25 to go

giving the visitors a 41 – 36 lead. Stuarts Draft clawed back to 41 – 40 then Sam scored in the lane on a put back to make it 43 – 40 with 1:24 to go in the quarter. The Cougars answered to make it 43 – 42 then Gio got a floater to drop in the lane making it 45 – 42. Again the Cougars answered to come within one but Rhylan Martin helped Fort's cause with a three pointer at the end of the third giving the Indians a 48 – 44 lead.

The close game continued in the fourth. To be honest, neither team played well with Draft turning the ball over and missing easy shots while Fort's guards had multiple turnovers and Sam couldn't buy a shot in the second half. Both teams looked more like squads playing their first game of the year instead of one near the end of the season. In a word, the game was sloppy. One exception to this was the fine hustle and good defensive play by Del Ray.

Gio's drive with 6:28 to go gave Fort a 50 – 46 lead. Draft closed with a foul shot and jumper to make it 50 – 49 with 6:05 to go. Jalen Alexander managed to get two in the paint for the Indians then Gio scored again on a drive to make it 54 – 49. Draft came back with a field goal with 4:55 to go but Tripp extended Fort's lead to 57 – 51 with the first of his three pointers of the quarter. Fort went ice cold for the next three minutes as Draft rallied to tie the score with 3:37 to go then went up 60 – 57. Gio's drive made it 60 – 59 then Carter Fink again scored on a put back to give Fort a 61 – 60 lead with 2:22 to go. Draft's Frame then made his second three pointer of the quarter to give Draft a 63 – 61 lead with 2:22 to go. That's when Gio and Sam got Fort within one and set the stage for Tripp to hit his game winning three pointer with 29.3 seconds left.

Gio led Fort with 22 points. Sam scored 14, nine of which came in the second quarter. Tripp, Rhylan, and Carter F. each had six and Gus had five for the Indians. Donovan Jenkins had 17 and Derrick Moore 16 for the Cougars.

Fort closes the regular season with a trip to Wilson Memorial on Wednesday night. Wilson's District record is 7 – 4 which makes it important for Fort to earn another win to finish as the runner-up to Staunton. A Wilson win would leave three teams (Fort Defiance, Stuarts Draft, and Wilson) with identical 8 – 4 records. A Fort win would guarantee the Indians 2nd place in the District.

Grandfather's note: Despite having such a good first quarter, Gus played his usual couple of minutes or so in each quarter except the fourth when he was only in for 43 seconds. It was good to see him make a vital contribution to the team's important win, though, and he seemed happy after the game. He hustled a lot on the court and was visibly tired as he should be when he plays.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	8	1	3-4	22
Bradley Hebb	1	0	0-0	2
Jasigh Ransome	0	0	1-2	1
Carter Fink	3	0	0-2	6
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	2	3	1-2	14
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	0	0-0	0
Rhylan Martin	0	2	0-0	6
Del Ray Jones	0	1	0-0	3
Tripp Hanger	0	2	0-0	6
Jalen Alexander	1	0	0-0	2
Gus Gutshall	2	0	1-2	5
Carter Berry	0	0	0-0	0
TOTAL	17	9	6-12	67

The following short article appeared in the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Indians Earn Big Road Win At Draft

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Feb 13, 2024

Fort Defiance picked up its third win in four games, earning a big 67-65 Shenandoah District boys basketball road victory over Augusta County opponent Stuarts Draft on Monday.

Sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz scored 13 of his game-high 22 points for the Indians after the half, continuing his strong season.

Senior forward Sam Garber also hit double digits for Fort with 14 points, while senior Carter Fink, junior Rhylan Martin and sophomore Tripp Hanger added six points apiece. Junior forward Donovan Jenkins led the Cougars with 17 points.

Derrick Moore, a sophomore guard, added 16 points for Draft, while senior big man Izaiah Ale Bell scored 13 and senior wing Harley Frame finished with 10.

The Indians (11-10, 8-3 Shenandoah) will travel to Wilson Memorial (14-8, 7-4 Shenandoah) for their regular-season finale on Wednesday, while Draft (15-7, 8-4 Shenandoah), which ended the year on a four-game skid, will turn its attention toward next week's Region 2B tournament

Game 22: Wilson 97, Fort Defiance 91

Wilson Memorial outslugs Fort Defiance 97 - 91

by Joe Hill

The Wilson Memorial Green Hornets rode the 48 point performance by junior Chase Snyder to a decisive 97 – 91 victory in the last regular season game for both teams on February 14 in the Wilson gym. Snyder had nine three pointers, ten field goals, and a free throw for his monumental game which saw Wilson break open a game that was tied at the half. The Wilson win left three teams with identical 8 – 4 records in the Shenandoah District: Wilson, Fort, and Stuarts Draft. Staunton was undefeated in District play. Wilson’s overall record ended the regular season at 15 – 8; Fort’s dropped to 11 – 11. Both teams will enter regional play next week. Wilson is in Class 3 whereas Fort is in Class 2.

Snyder’s huge point total was memorable but most of his shots were uncontested as Fort’s defense apparently was left behind for the night. Eli Irving added 23 for the Hornets, nearly all on layups as the home team handily beat the Fort press and got easy shots for their 97 points.

Meanwhile, Fort’s shooting woes continued and ball handling was extraordinarily poor for this far along in the season. Fort took approximately 40 shots from beyond the three point arc but only ten found the mark. Tripp Hanger, normally one of the best three point shooters on the team, was home with the flu which added to Fort’s woes.

Gio Armendariz Cruz opened scoring with a drive. After Wilson tied it, Carter Fink, who led the Indians with 28 points, scored in the paint. Snyder’s three gave Wilson a 5 – 4 lead but Carter again answered for the Indians. Bradley Hebb scored on a drive to give Fort a momentary lead at 8 – 7 with 4:51 to go in the quarter. Wilson scored the next six points to go up 13 – 8 before Carter scored twice in the paint. Snyder again bombed in a three pointer but Bradley’s drive got Fort within two at 16 – 14. Wilson scored five to go up 21 – 14 until Rhylan Martin hit a three pointer for the Indians. In the final minute of the quarter Wilson scored seven while Fort got a three pointer from Evan Braun and two from Sam Garber to make it 28 – 22 in favor of the home team.

The second quarter was kinder to FDHS. Gio got a free throw but Wilson spurted to a 33 – 23 advantage before Del Ray Jones swished a three pointer. Wilson went up 35 – 26 then Carter got a bucket with 4:07 to go and followed that with a three point play to get the Indians within four at 35 – 31. After another Snyder three pointer, Sam got a triple to go. Gus Gutshall, as he has done all season, turned two consecutive offensive rebounds into points to get the Indians within two at 40 – 38. After a Wilson field goal, Del Ray again hit a three. Wilson went up 44 – 41 with 40 seconds to go but Evan Braun found the range for a three to tie it at halftime, 44 – 44.

The third quarter was disastrous for the Indians. Carter F. got two on an offensive rebound after Snyder hit another three and Gus once again scored on a put back to get the Indians within one at 49 – 48. Over the next several minutes, all Fort could manage was two free throws by Carter as the home team sprinted out to a 62 – 50 lead. Sam got two with 3:00 to go in the quarter but again the Indians could only manage a free throw by Carter Berry and one by Carter Fink over

the next two minutes. Meanwhile, Wilson jumped their lead to 68 – 54. Evan scored on a layup after a steal and Sam got a three but the damage had been done. Wilson outscored Fort 28 – 15 in the quarter to take a commanding 72 – 59 lead going into the final quarter.

Bradley's drive cut the deficit to thirteen at 74 – 61 but Wilson went up 77 – 61 before Sam rang home another trey. Carter Fink's two free throws and jumper in the lane got FDHS to 79 – 68. Gio then made two free throws as Fort cut the deficit to 79 – 70 but down the stretch the Hornets didn't slow down their assault. Fort got free throws from Sam and Gio, a two pointer by Carter, a three by Gio, then two more field goals by Carter but the home team extended their lead to 92 – 81 with 2:25 to go. Fort got a bucket by Gio and a three by Sam but it was too little, too late as Wilson went up 94 – 86 with 1:32 to go. Gio got two more and Evan hit three free throws to end the scoring for the Indians. The final was 97 – 91 in favor of the Green Hornets.

Carter's 28 points was a highlight for Fort as was the play of Evan. There were few other bright spots as Gio and Sam each had poor shooting nights and Fort's guards committed entirely too many turnovers. To be honest, there has been very little, if any, improvement in this team since December.

Addendum: The Region 2B tournament pairings were announced. Fort is seeded 4th and will host Luray, seeded 5th, on Tuesday, February 20. Luray is 15 – 7 overall, 11 – 5 in the Bull Run District. Madison County is seeded 1st, Buckingham County 2nd, and Clarke County 3rd.

Grandfather's note: The results tonight were disappointing but not surprising. Fort played tonight like they have all season: a helter skelter offense with turnovers galore, poor shooting and shot selection, plus a porous defense. I don't have field goal percentage numbers but surely Fort's was under 30%. Gus, on the other hand, was 3 – 3 from the field, had zero turnovers, and four rebounds yet he played only one minute in the first and fourth quarters. Once again, the only time he touched the ball was when he got a rebound. This is the way it has been all season. Again, I'm disappointed but not surprised.

FORT DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	3	1	4-6	13
Bradley Hebb	3	0	0-0	6
Jasigh Ransome	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Fink	11	0	6-10	28
Trey Miller	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	2	4	1-3	17
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	1	2	3-3	11
Rhylan Martin	0	1	0-0	3
Del Ray Jones	0	2	0-0	6
Tripp Hanger	0	0	0-0	0
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	3	0	0-0	6
Carter Berry	0	0	1-2	1
TOTAL	23	10	15-24	91



The following article appeared in the Daily News Record:

High School Boys Basketball Snyder Pours in 48 In Wilson Victory

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record
Feb 15, 2024

It was a historic night for Wilson Memorial guard Chase Snyder and one that he won't soon forget. The junior erupted for a career-high 48 points, including nine 3s, as the Green Hornets defeated Fort Defiance 97-91 in Shenandoah District boys basketball action on Wednesday.

Snyder hit 19 shots from the field for Wilson in the home victory. Eli Irving, a junior wing, also impressed with 21 points for the Green Hornets, while senior guard Max Vess hit double digits with 10.

The Indians were led by senior forward Carter Fink with a career-high 28 points, while classmate Sam Garber, another forward, added 17. Sophomore guard Gio Armendariz Cruz finished with 13 points for Fort.

Wilson (15-8, 8-4 Shenandoah) is the No. 8 seed in Region 3C and will play at top-seeded Spotswood (24-0) in the quarterfinals on Friday, while the Indians (11-10) wait to see where they play in Region 2B next week.

Fort Defiance 22 22 15 32 — 91

Wilson Memorial 28 16 28 25 — 97

FORT DEFIANCE (11-10) — G. Armendariz Cruz 4 4-6 13, B. Hebb 3 0-0 6, J. Ransome 0 0-0 0, C. Fink 11 6-10 28, T. Miller 0 0-0 0, S. Garber 6 1-3 17, A. Metz 0 0-0 0, E. Braun 3 3-3 11, R. Martin 1 0-0 3, D. Jones 2 0-0 6, J. Alexander 0 0-0 0, G. Gutshall 3 0-0 6, C. Berry 0 1-2 1. Totals 33 15-25 91.

WILSON MEMORIAL (15-8) — A. Flesher 1 0-0 2, C. Snyder 19 1-2 48, B. Pulley 0 0-0 0, R. Mundie 2 0-0 5, M. McWhorter 1 3-4 5, E. Irving 9 3-8 21, G. Collier 0 0-0 0, M. Vess 5 0-2 10, G. Wright 2 2-5 6. Totals 39 9-21 97.

3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 10 (S. Garber 4, E. Braun 2, D. Jones 2, G. Armendariz Cruz, R. Martin), Wilson Memorial 10 (C. Snyder 9, R. Mundie).

Game 23: Luray 80, Fort Defiance 67

Luray sends Fort Defiance packing, 80 - 67

by Joe Hill

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 DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
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
TOTAL	19	8	5-13	67



The following article appeared in the Staunton News Leader:

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. Ancell 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).

News Virginian Article about Sam Garber

Athlete Spotlight: Fort Defiance's Samuel Garber has grown into a leader on and off the court

CHRIS LASSITER For The News Virginian

The growth spurt happened sometime around the pandemic.

Fort Defiance's Samuel Garber was somewhere in the neighborhood of 5-foot-9 when students were sent home to quarantine. Shortly after arriving back at school, he stood 6-foot-3. Somewhere between his sophomore and senior years, Garber added another inch for good measure.

Growth for Garber, however, can't just be measured in terms of height.

The Indians senior has grown by leaps and bounds as a leader and a basketball player. The 6-foot-4 shooting guard has helped fill the scoring void left by former teammate and 1,000-point scorer Tyreek Veney.



Garber is also one of five upperclassmen — along with Dell Ray Jones, Carter Fink, Jalen Alexander and Austin Metz — learning an entirely new offensive system under first-year coach Mike Gale.

Heading into Tuesday night's contest with Buffalo Gap — where Garber poured in a game-high 28 points, the senior guard is averaging 19 points, six rebounds, three-and-a-half steals and one block per game.

"He is fearless," Gale said of Garber. "He can score from anywhere on the floor. Of course, he gets frustrated when he misses a few shots like they all do, but he is not

afraid to let the next shot fly. That is a must in the system from our primary scorers. He is a fierce competitor. He has a tremendous motor, and has a major impact on the game on both the offensive and defensive ends. If he is around the ball, more times than not, he comes up with it.”

Change of pace

Gale and former coach Brandon Fulk are both part of the Fort Defiance coaching tree. Both men played at Fort in high school before eventually accepting the school’s head coaching position. At the end of the 2022-2023 season, Fulk informed the school that he intended to step away.

Gale, who was coaching Fort’s girls' basketball team then, took over the boys' coaching job. Gale runs a fast-paced, frenetic system that creates quick scoring opportunities and loads of three-point field goal attempts.

“It’s definitely been very different,” Garber said. “All through our younger years, we were all coached on how we would play in high school. That’s really all that our seniors knew. I do think we’re starting to get used to it now. Heading into the playoffs, I feel we’re looking like a better team.”

If any player is a good fit for Gale’s system, it’s Garber.

At 6-foot-4, he can finish around the rim. Garber also has textbook shooting form and deep range on his jumper, which makes him a threat from beyond the threepoint arc.

“He’s tall, and it feels like he’s going to make every shot,” said Jones, a fellow senior and one of Garber’s best friends on the team. “His shot looks so nice. He’s a leader. He communicates well. He’s the guy you want to shoot the shot when it’s a big moment.”

Garber’s scoring ability was never more evident than when the senior shooting guard dropped a career-high 37 points against Waynesboro.

When he gets in a groove offensively, watching Garber play offense is something to behold.

“It was just awesome to watch him score 37 points,” Jones said. “It felt like he scored 50. Every shot felt like it was going in. Just being able to pass him some of those shots was pretty cool.”

The upperclassman credits the team for creating scoring opportunities for him. “The ball was shared well that night,” Garber said. “I found myself more open. And when the ball got to my hands that night, I made it count. A lot of my shots were falling.”

Swan song

On Friday night, Fort will host Staunton.

Technically, it’s just the next game on the schedule. In terms of the Shenandoah District standings, it doesn’t count more or less in the wins-and-losses column than any other district game.

However, it’s not just any game. It’s Senior Night for Jones, Metz, Fink, Alexander and Garber.

For Fink, Jones and Garber, it’s a signature moment in a journey that started as AAU teammates as 11-year-olds. For all five seniors, it’s been a journey marked by many trips to Cook Out, embracing change, and battling on the court for one another.

For one final time in the regular season, the five Fort seniors will put it all on the line in front of the home fans.

Garber has his sights set on a postseason run. However, knowing that he’s playing in his final regular season home game, the senior just wants to soak it all in. “I love hanging out and bonding with the teammates,” said Garber, whose favorite on-the-court memory this year was the Fort team scoring 100 points. “After some games, we like to go out to eat and spend time together. That’s been special. Especially looking at it from a senior standpoint, you try not to take those moments for granted.”

The senior is making all the memories he can. “After this year,” Garber said, “they’re going to be gone.”

2023-24 Season Statistics

Name	2Pt FG	3Pt FG	FTM	FTA	FT%	Points	Points Per Game
Gio Armendariz Cruz	120	13	84	115	73%	363	15.8
Bradley Hebb	27	1	8	22	36%	65	2.8
Jasigh Ransome	22	18	32	57	56%	130	5.7
Carter Fink	96	2	33	80	41%	231	10.0
Trey Miller	5	6	8	16	50%	36	1.6
Sam Garber	59	86	48	74	65%	424	18.4
Austin Metz	4	8	1	6	17%	33	1.4
Evan Braun	14	12	14	32	44%	78	3.4
Rhylan Martin	14	17	5	12	42%	84	3.7
Del Ray Jones	2	33	2	2	100%	105	4.6
Tripp Hanger	8	49	7	13	54%	170	7.4
Jalen Alexander	20	0	13	28	46%	53	2.3
Gus Gutshall	22	0	11	25	44%	55	2.4
Carter Berry	22	4	9	16	56%	65	2.8
FDHS	435	249	275	498	55%	1892	82.3
OPPONENT						1908	83.0
WINS						11	
LOSSES						12	
GAMES PLAYED						23	

FORT DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

2023-24 Team Season Statistics from Hudl.com (one game missing - Buffalo Gap on 2/6/24)

#	Athletes	Games Played	Value Point System	Field Goals Made	Field Goal Attempts	Field Goal %	2 Pt		2 Pt Field Goal %
							Field Goals Made	Field Goal Attempts	
#	Athletes	GP	VPS	FGM	FGA	FG%	2FGM	2FGA	2FG%
1	Gio Armendariz Cruz	21	1.02	129	359	35.9%	116	287	40.4%
2	Bradley Hebb	14	0.79	28	101	27.7%	27	87	31.0%
3	Jasigh Ransome	22	0.97	37	126	29.4%	20	59	33.9%
4	Carter Fink	21	1.28	91	160	56.9%	89	152	58.6%
5	Trey Miller	22	0.83	11	45	24.4%	5	9	55.6%
10	Sam Garber	22	0.92	134	418	32.1%	52	124	41.9%
12	Austin Metz	21	0.88	12	44	27.3%	4	7	57.1%
14	Evan Braun	22	0.87	26	101	25.7%	14	35	40.0%
20	Rhylan Martin	19	0.81	28	97	28.9%	14	30	46.7%
22	Dell Ray Jones	22	0.99	32	125	25.6%	2	8	25.0%
24	Tripp Hanger	21	0.91	53	178	29.8%	7	27	25.9%
32	Jalen Alexander	21	1.21	20	46	43.5%	20	44	45.5%
40	Gus Gutshall	22	1.61	21	47	44.7%	21	47	44.7%
44	Carter Berry	22	1.29	25	51	49.0%	22	36	61.1%
	TEAM	22	1.00	647	1898	34.1%	413	952	43.4%

#	Athletes	3 Pt Field Goals Made	3 Pt Field Goal Attempts	3 Pt Field Goal %	Free Throws Made	Free Throw Attempts	Free Throw %	Points	Points Per Game
1	Gio Armendariz Cruz	13	72	18.1%	84	115	73.0%	355	16.9
2	Bradley Hebb	1	14	7.1%	10	23	43.5%	67	4.8
3	Jasigh Ransome	17	67	25.4%	30	56	53.6%	121	5.5
4	Carter Fink	2	8	25.0%	30	78	38.5%	214	10.2
5	Trey Miller	6	36	16.7%	8	16	50.0%	36	1.6
10	Sam Garber	82	294	27.9%	46	72	63.9%	396	18.0
12	Austin Metz	8	37	21.6%	1	6	16.7%	33	1.6
14	Evan Braun	12	66	18.2%	14	31	45.2%	78	3.5
20	Rhylan Martin	14	67	20.9%	5	12	41.7%	75	3.9
22	Dell Ray Jones	30	117	25.6%	2	2	100.0%	96	4.4
24	Tripp Hanger	46	151	30.5%	7	13	53.8%	159	7.6
32	Jalen Alexander	0	2	0.0%	13	27	48.1%	53	2.5
40	Gus Gutshall	0	0	0.0%	9	21	42.9%	51	2.3
44	Carter Berry	3	15	20.0%	9	17	52.9%	62	2.8
	TEAM	234	946	24.7%	268	489	54.8%	1796	81.6

FORT DEFIANCE BASKETBALL 2023- 24

#	Athletes	Minutes Played	Offensive	Defensive	Total	Assists	Turnovers	Assist to
			Re-bounds	Re-bounds	Re-bounds			Turnover Ratio
		MINS	OREB	DREB	REB	AST	TO	A/TO
1	Gio Armendariz Cruz	456	49	54	103	88	84	1.1
2	Bradley Hebb	208	13	15	28	33	26	1.3
3	Jasigh Ransome	317	23	35	58	43	49	0.9
4	Carter Fink	316	94	24	118	10	23	0.4
5	Trey Miller	234	25	29	54	10	21	0.5
10	Sam Garber	436	53	74	127	13	41	0.3
12	Austin Metz	145	13	13	26	8	13	0.6
14	Evan Braun	282	22	59	81	10	26	0.4
20	Rhylan Martin	193	15	22	37	16	18	0.9
22	Dell Ray Jones	332	28	86	114	35	25	1.4
24	Tripp Hanger	314	15	34	49	21	20	1.1
32	Jalen Alexander	187	59	25	84	6	21	0.3
40	Gus Gutshall	148	50	16	66	10	6	1.7
44	Carter Berry	202	34	24	58	5	15	0.3
	TEAM	3770	493	510	1003	308	388	0.8

#	Athletes	Deflections	Steals	Blocks	Fouls	Charges
						Taken
		DEFL	STL	BLK	FOUL	CHG
1	Gio Armendariz Cruz	31	44	4	29	0
2	Bradley Hebb	15	22	2	26	0
3	Jasigh Ransome	34	31	5	23	0
4	Carter Fink	29	21	1	39	0
5	Trey Miller	17	21	0	33	0
10	Sam Garber	72	66	19	54	1
12	Austin Metz	10	15	1	13	0
14	Evan Braun	18	26	10	38	3
20	Rhylan Martin	28	16	6	25	0
22	Dell Ray Jones	65	35	1	64	4
24	Tripp Hanger	21	28	2	23	0
32	Jalen Alexander	17	15	1	21	0
40	Gus Gutshall	6	9	0	10	0
44	Carter Berry	26	16	3	20	0
	TEAM	389	365	55	418	8

Final 2023-24 Shenandoah District Standings

Shenandoah District Winter 2023 - 24 Boys Varsity Basketball Standings

Team	Conference Record	Overall Record
Staunton	12 - 0	17 - 7
Fort Defiance	8 - 4	11 - 12
Stuarts Draft	8 - 4	15 - 7
Wilson Memorial	8 - 4	15 - 9
Buffalo Gap	4 - 8	10 - 13
Waynesboro	3 - 10	4 - 17
Riverheads	0 - 12	4 - 18



2023-24 All-District Players: Sam Garber and Gio Armendariz Cruz

High School Boys Basketball **Hamilton Named Shenandoah's Best Player**

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record

Feb 22, 2024



Staunton's Durrell Hamilton takes a shot between Spotswood's Cam Pacheco and Jackson Li.
Daniel Lin / DN-R

Back at his original school and playing alongside his lifelong teammates, Durrell Hamilton put together a season to remember this year.

The senior guard, who transferred back to Staunton this season after a year at Eastern Mennonite, is the Shenandoah District Player of the Year.

Hamilton, who led the league in average and was known for his shiftiness and ability to get into the paint with ease, had a big-time season.

Joining Hamilton on the all-district first team was senior teammate Manny Chapman, another impressive guard, along with Fort Defiance senior Sam Garber and sophomore Gio Armendariz Cruz, who both shined this season.

Stuarts Draft junior big man Donovan Jenkins also earned first-team honors, along with Waynesboro junior Zevion Robinson, who had a breakout year.

Wilson Memorial also placed two on the first team with prolific scoring junior guard Chase Snyder and senior wing Max Vess both getting selected.

The all-district second team consisted of three players from the Storm in junior guards Joaqin Bell and Ky'Ree Scott, along with senior Jack Jones.

Other second-team selections were Riverheads junior Henley Dunlap, Buffalo Gap sophomore Isaac Goff and senior Logan Hewitt, and Stuarts Draft junior wing Landon Graber and sophomore point guard Derrick Moore.

Cougars head coach Brad DeWitt was named the Coach of the Year.

2023-24 Season Overview

The 2023 - 24 basketball season for Fort Defiance was a trying one. Grandson Gus Gutshall had been promoted to the varsity and my hopes were that he would see significant playing time and do well. The latter ended up being true, not the former. It was very gratifying to see him trying hard on the court, doing what he was expected to do, and somehow trying to adjust to a system that really did not have a place for players of his type. Gus is a good power forward who rebounds well and can score in the paint. But in 2023 - 24 a new coach came, Mike Gale, and with him a new system, the so-called Grinnell System.

Here is a description of the Grinnell System as per Wikipedia:

- The first possible shot is the best possible shot, where three-point field goal attempts are preferred over shorter shots.
- Shoot as many three-pointers as possible.
- In terms of defense, giving up an uncontested layup is better than a shot clock violation.
- Always double team the person with the ball.
- Every player but the shooter goes for the offensive rebound.
- Offensive rebounds should be sent back for another three-point attempt, not a shorter putback for two points.
- Players rotate in and out, generally five at a time, every 1 -2 minutes with all players on the bench seeing action.

So how did this system work? In my opinion, very poorly. The Indians ended with a 11 - 12 season record despite having several good returning players and playing in a much weakened Shenandoah District. Here is my analysis of the system's pros and cons at Fort Defiance High:

What I consider good about the Grinnell System used at FDHS:

- All kids got to play some. With some coaches, Gus' playing time would perhaps have been less though it is hard to imagine how that would be true since he spent less time on the court than thirteen of his fourteen teammates.

What I consider bad about the Grinnell System used at FDHS:

- My biggest complaint--players became selfish. The Fort players, even the JV players, quickly caught onto this. Once a player had the ball in his hands, nearly all the time his eyes were on the hoop, not his teammates. Assists were rare in this system. Players did not look for each other. As I said in one game's report, the players wore the same uniform but were not a team.
- With the emphasis on shooting in the first ten seconds of possession, the quality of shots taken was miserable. Players looked for a shot, not necessarily a good shot. In my opinion, there is no reason for a teenager to be shooting the ball from ten feet beyond the three point arc. This happened repeatedly for FDHS. Even players on the JV team would try shots from beyond 25 feet from the basket. Needless to say, nearly all of these were unsuccessful attempts. I would say these weren't shots, they were prayers. For the season, Fort Defiance scored more baskets and points with two point field goals (435

made) than three point shots (239 made), quite contrary to the intent of the Grinnell System, but proof that the system did not work as planned.

- If you have several players with good shooting ability, teams can put big points on the board. This is was certainly not true for Fort Defiance. I would not rate a single player of the fourteen on the team as a good shooter. Most don't even know how to shoot a jump shot--their form is awful. I question whether anyone had ever taught them the mechanics of a proper jump shot. Early in the season I rewatched one of their games and counted the shots taken and made. There were 106 shots taken, 74 of which were misses! In one game! In the final game of the season the team shot 2 for 22 from beyond the three point line in the first half. For the season, Fort made less than 25% of its three point attempts.
- Taller players, potential rebounders, set up away from the basket. Sam Garber, at 6' 5", would have been very effective in the paint but he normally was found somewhere beyond the arc, looking for a three pointer to launch.
- When a shot was taken, offensive players crashed the boards, leaving no one back on defense. How many layups did the opponents get this year? Entirely too many to count.
- The pressing defense was grossly ineffective. The Grinnell System places a high priority on causing the opposing team to commit turnovers. Against weak teams, this defense seemed to work OK, but any decent team got three-on-one or three-on-two breaks constantly. In the season's twenty three games, Fort gave up 80 or more points fifteen times. I'm not sure Fort's boys ever were taught the basics of playing defense. The Indians tended to play defense with their hands, not their feet.
- The defensive scheme put players in positions wrong for their skills. Gus was assigned to be the point man on the press. Being fleet on foot is not where he excels. And who was back to defend against the (inevitable) fast break? A guard.
- The emphasis on three point shots means other shots were ignored. For example, for the season Fort shot 55% from the foul line. That's a miserable statistic for any basketball team. As a comparison, last year's Fort team shot 66% for the year. During one game, I counted **196** three point shots were taken in pregame warmup. Only **4** foul shots were taken. Like his teammates, Gus routinely shot 12 - 15 three pointers in the warmups even though there was 0% chance that he would shoot from beyond the arc during the game. Your foul shooting is not going to improve if you don't practice it.
- A team's offensive and defensive strategies should depend on its personnel. Gus is a decent low block forward. He can rebound from that location and score if he gets the ball. Fort's system had no place for a player like him. By the end of the year, I saw that he rarely tried to post up on a defender because there was little to no chance his teammates would pass to him. They were too busy looking for a shot, good or bad. I complained all year that the only time his hands touched the ball on offense came when he snared a rebound. And Gus wasn't the only one who didn't fit this system. Fort's guards were all driving guards, not guards who could pull up and shoot jump shots. As a result, they would frequently drive into a crowded lane, force up a poor shot, then the opponent would get the rebound and get an easy layup because Fort had no one back on defense.
- In Fort Defiance's deployment of this system, there was no attention paid to the clock nor the score. If Fort had the lead and gained possession of the ball with 20 seconds to go in a quarter, did they hold the ball for the last shot? Never. Again, the attention seemed to be on shot taking, not **good** shot taking. In a close game, in my mind, the last thing you'd want to see is a player taking a contested three point shot or go one-on-three into the lane.

- There was no reward for good play nor punishment for repeated mistakes. The only thing that mattered is which five names were called to go in at the next one minute interval. These names seemed to be randomly generated but if that were true Gus would have played much more. I watched games where one guard committed five turnovers in a single period yet was never pulled from the rotation schedule. Likewise, there were times when a player would make two consecutive nice plays only to find himself and his teammates pulled at the next clock stoppage.
- Thanks to this system, the games were not competitive. Fort was blown away by good teams and walloped the poor ones. There were only four games out of twenty three that ended with less than a ten point spread, win or lose. Two of these were in the first five games of the season against Turner Ashby. In every other game except Stuarts Draft and Wilson, by mid fourth quarter or earlier the outcome was well determined. For the season, the median point difference between winner and loser was 20 points!
- Players' skills did not develop noticeably throughout the season. The Grinnell system puts the emphasis on shot taking, not ball handling, clearly defined plays, or defense. It is highly unlikely that a teenager who isn't a good shooter in December will be a marksman in February. That was certainly true for FDHS. I actually thought some players regressed as the season progressed.
- With the frenetic style of play, players did not learn when it is better to push the ball on offense and when it is wise to slow down. There is no slowing down so whether it's four-on-one or one-on-four the goal is to get a shot heaved toward the basket.
- Finally, and importantly, I don't think the boys liked playing with this system. I could sense some bickering near the end of the season among the team. High fives were rare between players. The fans certainly didn't like the way Fort played; in almost every game I could hear multiple Fort supporters yelling "Pass the ball!" A high school basketball game should be a fun event for players and fans. The games this year didn't meet that standard and that is inexcusable.

I wish I were summing up this season writing more pleasantly about how it went. Again, my criticism is of the system, not of Gus and his efforts. In 2022 I wrote the following about how important high school basketball has been in our family: Henry and Gus are members of the fourth consecutive generation in our family who have played high school basketball and played it well. Their great-grandfather, George Hanger, was the star basketball player for Middlebrook in the 1930's. The next generation had three family members who played high school basketball. I played on an undefeated state championship team at Bramwell (WV) High School in 1967. Truth be told, I was a substitute on that team though I played in every game. The following year, when I was a starter and team captain, we were District (Sectional) Champions and Regional Runners-up. Our record was 19 – 5. In that same generation, Bill Hanger, Henry and Gus' great-uncle, was a great basketball player for Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton and went on to earn a basketball scholarship at Randolph-Macon College. Bill's sister Kay Hanger Carter played basketball for Emory and Henry College. In the generation that followed, Henry and Gus' aunt Kay Henry Hill was a three year starter on the girls team at Fort Defiance High School where she also won a school record six state championships in tennis and volleyball and was named as the Staunton/Waynesboro/Augusta County student athlete of the year. I am so happy that Gus and his brother Henry carried on this tradition.

The season statistics from huddle.com justified my claim that Gus was underused and overlooked this year. He played 148 minutes during the season, next to last of the fourteen boys

on the team. The average number of minutes played was 270, nearly twice his time on the court. But look at these statistics: 1) He had the third highest number of offensive rebounds on the team 2) He had the fewest number of turnovers out of the fourteen players 3) His assist/turnover ratio was the best on the team 4) His field goal percentage was third best 5) He committed the fewest fouls on the team 6) Best of all, Huddle produces a statistic called Value Point System. Huddle says “VPS provides an all-encompassing look at how players and teams perform by weighing their positive contributions against their negative ones. The resulting number shows how effective the player is. The Value Point System comes from a formula that factors in several counting stats to produce a number that gives a more well-rounded indication of overall performance.” ***Gus had, by far, the highest VPS score on the team.*** So why was a player judged to be the most effective on the team allowed to be on the court for fewer minutes than all of his teammates except one? I’d like to brag that this is the second year in a row a Gutshall boy has had the highest VPS on his team; last year Henry had that honor.

For twenty three nights I watched Gus participate with and contribute to this team. And on twenty three occasions I wrote about the games and complained about how things were going. I hope his memories of this season are of his contributions and not of the unpleasanties I’ve written about.

Being on a team and doing your part is an important life skill to learn. I am happy that Gus had this opportunity; I just wish it had been a more enjoyable year for him. For most games he had a loyal following of from six to twelve family members who enjoyed watching him play. All of us were exceptionally proud to see #40 on the court giving it his best.

Joe Hill

