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SPORTS

Marion, Mississinewa advance to Sectional 44 championship

By Sean Douglas

Having drawn Madison-Grant in their Sectional 44 semifinal matchup on Thursday night, Marion Head Coach Doug Porter knew it was going to be tough sledding. While he had Vikram Oddiraju, Jack Fauser, and Alex Spitzer at his disposal, the Argylls countered with Nick Evans, Jace Gilman, and Jackson Manwell, each of whom played a major role in Madison-Grant’s success this season. From the opening serve, the Giants and Argylls battled with one another, grinding for every point and every set, but in the end, hard fought triumphs by Fauser and Spitzer at No. 2 and No. 3 singles, lifted Marion to a 3-2 victory and a berth in the Sectional 44 championship.

“I knew this was going to be exactly like it was tonight,” Marion Head Coach Doug Porter said. “This is probably the best season that Madison-Grant has had in the history of their boys program.” Oddiraju quickly gave Marion an early 1-0 lead, defeating Nick Evans 6-1, 6-1, but the Argylls collected the next two points, both in doubles. Clayton Hull and Christopher Fox defeated Clayton Drook and Ryan Sebastian 6-4, 6-4 at No. 2 doubles, while the team of Lance Wilson and Bryce Metzger overcame a furious rally by Elijah Maki and Soren Bruehler to win the No. 1 doubles match 6-2, 2-6, 6-4. For over two hours, Fauser and Gilman battled tooth and nail, clawing and scratching for every point, particularly in the second

set. At one point, Gilman led by 4-3 and 5-4 scores, but Fauser never wavered, winning the final three games to win 6-3, 7-5. “Jack had to dig really deep. You could see on his face that Jack was bewildered. You don’t fluster Jack a lot,” Porter said. “He had to be tough and come up with his best shots. I’m really proud of Jack for hanging in there. It was a great match.” Despite the loss, Madison-Grant Head Coach Tony Pitt was thrilled with how Gilman played in his final high school match. “That match in a nutshell summarizes Jace,” Pitt said. “His groundstrokes aren’t the best. His technique’s not the best, but he’s got heart, and he’s got desire. He’s been our leader, and he just left everything on the court. I could not be prouder of a

team or an individual as what I am of Jace.” The No. 3 singles match also went to three sets. Spitzer won the first set handily, throwing Manwell off of his game, but Manwell was able to turn it around in the second game, overcoming a 5-3 deficit to force a third set. “In the first set, Alex played really well and Jackson was struggling to play his game, and then Jackson turned it around in the second set,” Porter added. “Alex had him on the ropes at 5-3, and he got a little tentative at the end of that second set.” During the break in between sets, Porter gave Spitzer some tough love, instructing him to follow the game plan. That’s exactly what Spitzer did, and his strong

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Panthers fall to Ft. Wayne Canterbury

By Sean Douglas

Coming off their huge win over Mississinewa the evening before, Eastbrook was back on the pitch Tuesday evening, facing off against an always formidable Fort Wayne Canterbury squad. However, following their emotionally charged performance against a long-time county rival, fatigue was evident, and their energy level - off the charts 24 hours earlier - proved to be lackluster against a quality opponent. Despite a valiant effort at all levels of the pitch, the Panthers suffered their second loss of the season, falling to the Cavaliers, 3-0, in their regular season finale. Tuesday’s contest - a 1-0 defeat at the hands of the Oak Hill Golden Eagles - was the first time the Panthers lost, or were shut out, since August 25.

“We just had guys who were tired,” Eastbrook Head Coach Adam Hallis said. “That’s a big game last night. That was a tough Mississinewa team, and it was emotional. [Tonight was a bit] of a letdown.” Of all the teams on Eastbrook’s schedule, Fort Wayne Canterbury may have been the most technically sound team. Fort Wayne is a soccer hotbed in the state of Indiana, and the Cavaliers were proof of that. They moved the ball efficiently and effectively up and down the pitch with crisp, foot-to-foot passes, keeping consistent pressure on Eastbrook’s defensive back line. “They had touch across the board,” Eastbrook Head Coach Adam Hallis said. “They move well. They deserved three and they got their three. They are a sound team.” Over the first 30 minutes of play, while the Cavaliers

dominated the majority of the possession, the play was fairly even. The Panthers created their fair share of opportunities but were unable to find twine. Finally, in the final 12 minutes of the first half, the Cavaliers’ offensive pressure paid off. With 11:56 to play, Donovan Doolittle fired a perfect cross to a streaking Yahya Jan, who headed it in to give Canterbury a 1-0 lead – one they would not relinquish. “We sagged a little in the midfield, so when we won the ball, there was nobody to play to, where last night, we had that control and were able to play the ball around,” Hallis said. “Against a good team, that’s what happens.” Eastbrook looked to head into halftime only down one, but disaster struck in the final seconds, as a defensive miscommunication led to Canterbury’s second goal off a free kick as time



Sam Spiegel tracks the ball in Eastbrook’s regular season finale against Fort Wayne Canterbury.
Photo by Sean Douglas

expired. The Cavaliers put the finishing touches on their shutout early in the second half, scoring their third and final goal off a corner kick. Eastbrook was able to

collect a few more scoring chances in the final 45 minutes but ultimately were unable to find twine. Canterbury outshot the Panthers 14-4, including eight shots on frame.

Despite the loss, Eastbrook goalkeeper Tytus Anthony continued his sound play, making six saves against an unrelenting Canterbury attack. Since beat

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