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# SPORTS

## Running game, defense lift Giants in semifinal



Kainen Malone-Johnson (20), Trevor Stone (58), and Trevor Riah (53) combine to make a stop on South Side’s Matthew Morris, Marion will face Delta in the Sectional 20 championship this coming Friday. **Photo by Sean Douglas**

**By Sean Douglas**

Throughout the season, the Giants’ running game, together with their play on defense, have proved the biggest keys to their success.

On Friday night in the Sectional 20 semifinal at Dick Lootens Stadium, both played a significant role in one of the Giants’ most complete game victories of the season.

Khalid Stamps and Winston Baity each rushed for over 100 yards, the defense collected six sacks, and the Giants advanced to the Sectional 20 championship with a 33-14 triumph over the Fort Wayne South Side Archers.

Despite some injuries on the offensive line, the Giants did not miss a beat, rushing for an incredible 326 yards.

“They battled adversity. We got news that one kid wasn’t going to be able to play, and other guys stepped up,” Marion Head Coach James Bell said. “Johnny Davis played both ways. [AJ] Mitchener played both ways. Trevor Riah stepped in there and played on the d-line also, and so did Greg Johnson. They stepped up.”

Stamps has taken his game to another level over the last few games. After rushing for over 250 yards against Mississinewa last week, the senior rushed for 183 yards and two touchdowns against South Side, including a 45-yard run on the first play from scrimmage.

“He ran like this last year. The difference is that he had more of a supporting cast [last year,]” Bell said. “This

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## Wildcats stifle Cardinal Stritch in home opener

**By Sean Douglas**

In the game of basketball, offensive production can wane.

However, teams can control their defensive effort, and find success even when their shots are not falling.

In their home opener on Saturday against Cardinal Stritch, Indiana Wesleyan’s defensive play in the opening two quarters allowed them to work through their offensive struggles, and a 45-point second half helped them pull away in a 75-46 triumph.

The Wildcats clamped down on the Wolves all evening, holding them to just 33 percent shooting, including a paltry eight-of-30 showing in the first half.

Additionally, IWU was aggressive, forcing 26 Cardinal Stritch turnovers and recording 22 steals over the course of the contest.

“Our defense – there were a lot of errors and mental lapses – but what I was really proud of is this early in the season, playing so many new freshmen and transfers, they’ve really



Anne Secrest putting up a shot in the paint. **Photo by Sean Douglas**

caught on pretty quick,” IWU Head Coach Ethan Whaley said. “That’s a testament to the leadership on our team. They’re competing, and that’s been the greatest thing.”

IWU’s offense failed to find a consistent rhythm in the first half, though they

led for most of the contest. Stritch’s Ella Diny opened the scoring with a triple, and a pair of free throws from Timeah Stotts gave the Wolves an early 5-2 lead. But a pair of buckets from Anne Secrest and another field goal by Gabby Suarez put the Wildcats up

6-5. A 6-0 run, which included a triple from Purdue Northwest transfer Kelli Damman, increased IWU’s lead to 15-5, and an Adriana Trexler three-point play put the Wildcats up 18-10 at the first quarter break.

In the second quarter, however, the Wildcats struggled mightily, connecting on just one of their first 11 field goal attempts. Stritch briefly regained the lead at 22-21 with 3:29 remaining in the first half, but the Wildcats were finally able to knock some shots down in the final three minutes. IWU outscored Stritch 9-2 the rest of the way, including a triple from Dayton Groninger in the final seconds, to take a 30-24 lead into halftime.

With the team struggling to shoot, Whaley and his staff made the necessary adjustments, focusing more on their offense in the paint to create easy scoring chances and open up the perimeter more.

The changes worked to perfection. As a team, the

Wildcats finished with 40 points in the post.

“We missed layups and wide-open threes,” Whaley said. “We just told them to slow down a little bit and put them in. It’s our second game, our first home game, our first time in front of parents. I’m not sure if that played a role, but we settled in in the second half.”

Secrest, who finished with just six points in the first two quarters, got off to a hot start in the second half, scoring IWU’s first six points to increase their lead to 36-30. The Wildcats went on to outscore the Wolves 12-4 the rest of the quarter, taking a 48-34 advantage into the final frame.

Secrest, nearly two years removed from her devastating knee injury she suffered as a sophomore, looked as fluid and confident as she’d ever been in a Wildcat uniform. She consistently broke double teams, worked the glass, and established her presence in the paint.

Secrest led the Wildcats with 18 points and six re-

bounds, shooting seven-of-11 from the field.

“It’s been a long journey for her, and I’m proud of her,” Whaley said. “It was a tale of two halves for Anne. First half, she [struggled,] but second half, she just slowed down and played within herself.”

Freshman Maddie Lawrence was also stellar in her second collegiate game, recording five points and four rebounds.

“We had open threes in the first half, but they weren’t coming off paint touch kick outs. They weren’t coming off driving kicks or post touches,” Whaley said. “Once we realized that Maddy had it going in the post there a little bit, we just kept feeding her. She’s a freshman, but she is a really good decision maker. She made a lot of people better tonight.”

IWU dominated the fourth quarter, holding the Wolves off the scoreboard for 6:29 and leading by as many as 35 points before cruising to the 29-point vic-

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