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# Indians become first Grant Four three-peat champions

By Sean Douglas

In sports, as in life, success and greatness are born of adversity. And the Mississinewa Indians have faced plenty in the first half of the 2020-2021 season.

In the five games leading up to the annual Grant Four boys basketball tournament, the Indians finished 2-3, dropping a pair of games on the final possession, as well as suffering one of their worst defeats of the James Reed era – a 64-51 setback, at home, to the Madison-

Grant Argylls back on December 18, ending a 13-game winning streak against their longtime rival. However, instead of wilting, the Indians rose to the occasion, making it a priority to reconnect with one another, rediscover their defensive prowess, and most importantly, regain the confidence that has played such an important role in Mississinewa’s recent success.

“Last time we played them, we got off to a slow start, and we got down on ourselves,” Swanner said. “We had to make sure that we came in more prepared for this game, and I think we did.”

All three of those factors played dividends on Tuesday night in the Grant Four Championship, as Mississinewa found redemption, and made history, in a 48-45 triumph over the Argylls.

With the victory, Mississinewa won their third straight county title, becoming the first ever three-peat champion in the illustrious history of the Grant Four tournament.

“I could not be



The Indians became the first team in Grant County history to win the Grant Four in three consecutive seasons.

Photo by Sean Douglas

more proud of the guys we have,” Reed said. “We didn’t three-peat Grant Four because of me. It was because of the guys that we have and the ability to buy in and play together.”

Knowing that the Argylls would hold a psychological edge, it was imperative that the Indians got off to a strong start in the first quarter, and they did just that, playing with a fire that they did not have in the first matchup.

“Mississinewa played with a little different level of intensity then they did the first time. I don’t think there is any question about that,” Madison-Grant Head

Coach Kevin Cherry said. “They were really good defensively.”

“We were physically ready, but we weren’t mentally prepared,” McClung added. “We came into this game mentally prepared and ready to win the game.”

The two teams battled throughout the opening eight minutes. Tai McClung scored the Indians’ first two baskets, while the Argylls countered with Kaden Howell, who scored eight points in the first quarter to give Madison-Grant a 15-13 lead. In the process, Howell recorded his 1,000<sup>th</sup> point, becoming the 11<sup>th</sup> Argyll in school history to reach that milestone.

The turning point of the contest came in the second quarter. Trailing 22-15 after a Jase Howell triple with 5:30 to play before half-time, the Indians turned up their defensive intensity, holding the Argylls off the scoreboard for the remainder of the first half.

“In the first game, they hit a lot of threes,” Reed said. “We were letting them drive to the middle of the paint and then kick it out to the three. This game, I told them to keep them out of the middle. They came out and executed the plan so well.”

The Indians ended the first half on a 12-0 run, turning a six-point deficit

into a five-point lead. Sophomore Donovan Betts was the catalyst, knocking down two crucial triples – one to start the run, and one that gave Mississinewa an advantage they would not relinquish.

“In this game, a huge game...those two threes, that’s where we were able to separate,” Reed said. “Obviously, everyone was doing a lot of things, but those two threes, we had to have. For him to make those, that’s what championship teams do.”

The run continued into the third quarter, increasing to 17-0, as Landen Swanner scored the first five points

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## Argylls advance to Grant Four championship, collect seventh victory

By Sean Douglas

Over the last several seasons, the Madison-Grant Argylls’ core group of playmakers have had very little trouble scoring the basketball.

In fact, they shine in that department.

However, the majority of the Argylls’ success in the current campaign is a direct result of their play on defense and their continued excellence on that end of the floor resulted in yet another victory.

Kaden Howell put to-

gether another tremendous offensive effort, Grant Brown’s defensive brilliance was on full display, and the Argylls punched their ticket to the Grant Four championship game with a 51-38 triumph over the Oak Hill Golden Eagles in their semi-final contest on Tuesday afternoon.

“We had a gameplan coming into [today.] I don’t know how good it was or not, but the guys did a great job of executing and buying in at a really high level,” Madison-Grant Head Coach Kevin Cherry said. “That’s

a good win for us. I’m happy with our guys. It was a total team effort, and that’s our culture, and what it’s about.”

Brown was one of the major catalysts in the Argylls’ win, locking down the perimeter throughout the afternoon. Tasked with guarding Oak Hill shooting guard Landon Biegel, Brown held the Golden Eagles’ star sophomore to just 11 points – and only four in the first three quarters of play.

“Grant does so many things well,” Cherry said. “He just has bought into

this role of being an elite defender. He went from a guy who had the basketball in his hands all the time to now...guarding the other team’s best player. He has 100 percent bought into that, and I couldn’t be happier for him.”

In his first three years, Brown served as the team’s primary point guard, offensive facilitator, and one of Madison-Grant’s top scorers. Now, in his senior season, he has embraced the role of top defender as well – and it has been a near



Madison-Grant sophomore Jase Howell drives to the hoop in M-G’s Grant Four semifinal contest against Oak Hill. Photo by Sean Douglas

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