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# Lady Panthers notch 13th win

By Sean Douglas

In a battle between two longtime CIC and Grant County rivals on Saturday evening, Eastbrook and Madison-Grant battled one another from the opening tip to the final whistle.

But a strong fourth quarter, and a stout second half overall, proved to be the difference, as the Panthers pulled away to defeat the Argylls 57-37, securing their 13<sup>th</sup> win of the season in the process.

The game was close throughout the first two quarters. Eastbrook led just 9-7 after the first eight minutes and held only a six-point advantage at the halftime break.

“I just think we played a little on our heels to start the game,” Eastbrook Head Coach Jeff Liddick said.

“Credit Coach Bradley for his game plan, but instead of us dictating tempo and how we like to play, we kind of sat back and played slow and played with no aggressiveness whatsoever.”

However, at halftime, Liddick, as he has done a marvelous job of all season long, made the necessary changes, and the Panthers came out with renewed vigor in the second half.

“We made a couple of adjustments offensively and defensively, and we finally got some tempo going,”

## Pairings set for girls tourney

By Sean Douglas

On Sunday, the opening week’s pairings for the 46th Annual IHSAA Girls Basketball State Tournament were announced.

In Class 2A Sectional 39 at Taylor High School, both Eastbrook and Madison-Grant will have a first-round bye. The Argylls will face off against Tipton in the first semi-final contest on Friday, Feb. 5, and the Panthers will play the winner of Blackford and Taylor in the second semi-final later that evening.

In Class 3A Sectional 23 at Norwell, Oak Hill will take on Bellmont in the lone contest on Tuesday, Feb. 2. Mississinewa will face Heritage the next night, Wednesday, Feb. 3, in their first-round matchup.

Finally, in Class 4A Sectional 7 at Harrison, Marion will square off against NCC foe McCutcheon in their first-round game on Wednesday, Feb. 3.

Liddick said. “There were a lot of points scored in the third quarter, which is how we like to play, and I think that tempo started to wear them down a little bit.”

The third quarter saw a combined 37 points from both teams, both of whom seemed to find their groove.

“In the third quarter specifically, both teams got into a groove and found a comfort zone,” Madison-Grant Head Coach Bradley said. “Both teams hit shots, and we just kind of traded punches back and forth. We made some good shots.”

“Olivia was huge for us in the third quarter,” Liddick said. “They were face-guarding Johwen. They

were face-guarding Sophia. They tried to take them out of the game, which they did. But Olivia, she took the reins, took control, made some really nice drives to the basket, and found open teammates.”

However, the turning point of the contest came in the fourth quarter, when the Panthers outscored the Argylls 20-9.

“The fourth quarter felt like it was our third game in five days,” Bradley said. “We were trying to play hard. You could see effort. You could see competitiveness. But we were sloppy at times on closeouts, whether we were just off balance or tried to block jumpers. It was effortful, but it was a

little undisciplined. I think we are fatigued both physically and emotionally.

“But I was proud of how they competed tonight.”

After Sehдах McKim fouled out early in the final stanza, Lily McLaughlin entered the game and put together one of her best performances of the season, helping to put the Panthers firmly in the drivers’ seat.

“She made a statement tonight,” Liddick said. “In seven minutes of play, she was four-for-four from the field, three-for-five from the free-throw line, had six rebounds, and two blocked shots. Tonight was the best she has played all year in any game, whether it be JV or varsity. She was the spark in the fourth quarter for us. She was crashing the glass. She was making shots difficult for Madison-Grant in the paint. She was attacking the rim off the drive. She was a force tonight.”

McLaughlin and Howell each with 11 and six boards. Sophia Morrisison three-for-four from the field and two-of-three from beyond the arc for 10. Sehдах scored the first six points and finished with eight to go along with five rebounds.

For Madison-Grant, Azmae Turner scored 16 points to lead the Argylls, while Sarah Duncan scored eight.



Matthew Goolsby goes up for the slam against Lafayette Jefferson on Friday. Photo by Sean Douglas

# Giants battle hard, but fall to Lafayette Jeff

By Sean Douglas

Playing down two starters, and their head coach, the shorthanded Marion Giants performed valiantly against star forward Brooks Barnhizer and a talented Lafayette Jefferson squad on Friday night.

Despite the lack of key players and personnel at their disposal — leading scorer Jalen Blackmon, top rebounder Jermaine Woods, and Head Coach James Blackmon, who missed the contest due to COVID-19 contact tracing protocol — the Giants went toe-to-toe with the Bronchos, particularly in the first half.

However, a tremendous performance from Barnhizer, and a strong second half for the Bronchos overall, proved to be the difference, as the Giants fell to 5-5 with a 78-61 loss to their longtime NCC rival.

For the first time in over 20 years, Marion assistant coach Herb McPherson, an Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame member, took the reins and was pleased with what he saw throughout the evening, especially in the first two quarters.

“We ran the same sets

that Coach Blackmon runs,” McPherson said. “We played a little man-to-man defense and got after them a little bit. I think Coach Blackmon would be proud of the way they played, [and] I was very proud of them. We spaced the floor, we penetrated, and we did well running the offense. We missed some easy shots, but overall I thought our kids put forth a really great effort. I was proud of the way they balanced the floor and moved the ball.”

Every player who touched the floor for the Giants made a significant contribution.

Cubie Jones set the tone for the Giants in the first quarter. Offensively, Jones scored seven points, while collecting five rebounds and two steals on defense.

Freshman Taden Metzger, in his first start for Marion, impressed on both ends throughout the contest. Metzger scored 14 points, including eight points in the third quarter.

“That’s a game he should remember,” McPherson said. “When you start as a freshman, you remember where you started at, how

# Lady Bronchos pull away late from Marion

By Sean Douglas

For two-and-a-half quarters, the Marion Giants played efficient basketball against longtime NCC rival Lafayette Jefferson, knocking down their shots and playing sound defense.

However, after battling back early in the third quarter to cut their deficit to four points, the Bronchos took control the rest of the way, outscoring the Giants 31-13 in the final 12 minutes of the contest en route to a 65-43 triumph.

“We were only down [four,] then all of the sudden, we don’t score,” Marion Head Coach Jerry Freshwater said. “We missed some shots, and they

got some easy layups. A four-quarter game for us has been hard all year.”

The Giants, who trailed by as many as 18 in the second quarter of play, began to trim the Broncho lead late in the period. Over the final 2:30, the Giants outscored the Bronchos 11-2, which included a pair of triples from freshman Lalah Boyd and another from fellow freshman Talia Alsup, making it a 29-20 contest at halftime.

Marion kept pressing through the third quarter, and a Tori Beal basket around the three-minute mark had the Giants down four at 34-30 and with momentum swinging their direction.

However, after that, the Giants’ offense went cold, and the Bronchos began to pull away. Lafayette Jefferson ended the third quarter on a 9-3 run and led by double-digits the rest of the way.

While the Giants kept the game close early on, their offense was not efficient. For the game, Marion only shot 15-of-65 (23 percent) from the field and at times seemed to force shots rather than set up and run their offense.

Those quick looks resulted in a plethora of rebounds for the Bronchos, who had three players finish with nine boards or more. Sanaa Cartledge led the way with 16 rebounds, which in-

cluded 11 in the first half of play.

“Instead of catching the ball square like we have been doing, tonight, we were rushing them,” Freshwater said. “We were just kind of throwing them up there, but there wasn’t any pressure.”

However, despite the loss, Freshwater continues to be impressed with the progress he has seen from his squad.

“The girls are playing hard and doing the things that we need them to do,” Freshwater said. “It’s hard, but they are working at it. We’ve got freshmen playing at the varsity level. They are doing the things we need to

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