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Sports

Lady Indians hold off rally from Marion

By Sean Douglas

In Tuesday night’s contest between two longtime rivals, the Mississinewa Indians and the Marion Giants fought a battle from start to finish.

The Indians built a double-digit advantage midway through the second quarter only to see the Giants come roaring back to make it a one-possession game late in the fourth.

However, Mississinewa was able to close the game out, recording their third win of the season in a 70-67 triumph.

“We came out really, really strong – I just feel that we got super comfortable in the second half,” Mississinewa Head Coach Laura Friday said. “We felt we were in a good spot. Kudos to [Coach Freshwater] and the Giants, they fought hard, especially in that fourth quarter to make it really, really close at the end. I’m glad our girls pulled it out.”

While the Giants easily played their best game of the season, strong performances by Mia Catey, Alayna Webb, and the Indians’ defense, made the difference.

Catey finished with a career-high 24 points, which included a pair of clutch free throws in the guts of the game, while Webb made her presence felt on both ends, scoring 20 points and wreaking havoc on the Giants’ defensively throughout the evening.

“Mia and Alayna really wanted to win this game,” Friday said. “I’m glad that they stepped up. They stepped up in a big way. We really needed every single point that they scored. But they also did the little things. They calmed everybody down when things were getting crazy, and they were talking in the huddle. That’s the stuff we need for the rest of the season.”

Mississinewa ran a full-
Continued on Page 8



Oak Hill senior Kian Hite battles through contact against Eastbrook on Friday. *Photo by Sean Douglas*

Golden Eagles have season-best performance in win over Panthers

By Sean Douglas

“Enthusiasm breeds confidence, and confidence breeds hard play.”

Oak Hill Head Coach Kevin Renbarger has been preaching this message to his team over the last few weeks, as the Golden Eagles have worked to navigate a tough stretch, one in which they lost three of four heading into their conference matchup with Eastbrook on Friday night.

Those three key aspects had been missing since their win over Westernon Dec. 22. Sluggish starts proved costly in losses to Madison-Grant and Peru, while a plethora of turnovers led to a double-digit defeat to Southwood just three days earlier.

However, Renbarger’s words manifested themselves in his players on Friday night. From the opening tip until the final horn, Oak Hill’s enthusiasm, confidence, and hard play were on full display, and it led to their most impressive performance of the season, an 88-41 victory over the Panthers.

“It’s nice to get a victory. It’s nice to get to a win,” Renbarger said. “But to me, it’s not as much about the

victory, about the score...as much as it is about the way that we won the game.”

Oak Hill’s triumph boiled down to three key factors: their aggressiveness on defense, their confidence on offense, and the continued ascension of sophomore star Landon Biegel.

The Golden Eagles set the tone on the defensive end of the floor, forcing 21 Eastbrook turnovers, 15 of which came in the first two quarters, which allowed them to build a double-digit lead and sustain it throughout most of the contest.

“We turned it over too much,” Eastbrook Head Coach Greg Allison said. “And then...they were able to convert it into baskets. There for a while, we struggled sprinting back defensively. Unfortunately, with [games] like this, it just snowballs on you.”

Oak Hill’s defensive prowess led to a plethora of easy baskets, which allowed them to find their rhythm offensively. Thirteen Golden Eagles scored at least two points, and the team tied a program record with 13 made threes in the contest. As a team, Oak Hill shot 32-of-65 (49 percent) from the field and 13-of-29 (45 percent) from distance.

“Seeing the ball go in the basket helps with confidence and enthusiasm,” Renbarger said. “We’ve been preaching all of these intangibles, but then it helps when you see the ball go in the basket. This was as good of a shooting night as this group has had this year. They are all capable shooters, and obviously, we are hoping that this evolves into a better shooting than we have been.”

Heading into his sophomore season, there was no doubt that Biegel was already a special and gifted player. Throughout his freshman season, he showed flashes of greatness, and with the injuries the Golden Eagles sustained before the 2020-2021 campaign began, he was thrust into an even larger role – and all he has done is excel.

Biegel led the offensive charge for Oak Hill, scoring a career-high 33 points on 13-of-16 shooting from the floor.

“Last night in practice, he was shooting lights out, and I actually yelled at him, jokingly, to save those in his holster for tonight,” Renbarger said. “That is a once in a lifetime kind of a game for anybody to be in a zone

Continued on Page 8

Giants fall to Attucks

By Sean Douglas

For 32 minutes on Saturday evening at the Bill Green Arena, the Marion Giants, battled with not only one of the top teams on their schedule, but with one of the top teams in the state of Indiana.

However, despite a 37-point outburst from Jalen Blackmon and strong defense against a team full of both size and athleticism, the Giants suffered their fourth loss of the season—an 87-74 defeat at the hands of the Indianapolis Crispus Attucks Tigers.

But even in defeat, Marion Head Coach James Blackmon was proud of how his team played against the No. 8 team in Class 4A.

“Sometimes, that scoreboard gives you a false sense of winning or losing,” Marion Head Coach James Blackmon said. “I was proud the way our guys competed against a very good team. We got down early after that first quarter, but we battled them pretty much even after that.”

After a slow first half in which he scored just seven points, Blackmon exploded after halftime, scoring an incredible 30 points. Against a physical Tigers’ team that bodied him consistently, Blackmon was aggressive offensively, driving to the hoop and finishing through contact, while also

knocking three of the Giants’ six triples. After his performance on Saturday, Blackmon needs just nine points to pass three-time state champion and Marion Giant legend Jay Edward for second place on Marion’s all-time scoring list.

While the Tigers got their points, the Giants made them earn every basket. Marion forced Attucks into 13 turnovers, and on many occasions, the Giants forced the Tigers into poor shots.

But the difference came on the glass, as Attucks used their size and athleticism to create second and third chance opportunities.

“I just thought we didn’t quit,” Blackmon said. “We put pressure on those guys as well. We caused those guys to turn it over.”

In the first half, the Tigers outrebounded the Giants 25-14, which helped them build their double-digit advantage, and secured 38 rebounds total, 12 on the offensive glass.

“Second chance shots, transition buckets — those are big when you make a good defensive stop and all the sudden someone comes out of nowhere to get a put-back,” Blackmon said. “We just can’t get into a tipping match with an athletic team.”

The Giants fell into a hole early, as the Tigers scored the first 10 points and held

Continued on Page 8



Jalen Blackmon scored 37 points against the Tigers on Saturday. *Photo by Sean Douglas*