

Indians’ season comes to end with loss to Heritage

By Sean Douglas

Mississinewa’s Sectional 23 opener against Heritage on Wednesday evening at Norwell ended as all their games did throughout the course of the season — a battle right to the very end. However, after a close first half, the Indians’ went cold after halftime, making just seven field goals in the final two quarters in a season-ending 56-42 loss at the hands of the Heritage Patriots.

With the defeat, the Indians’ streak of consecutive first round playoff defeats reached 18.

Trailing just 24-21 after the second quarter, Mississinewa struggled to find their offensive rhythm in the second half, which included a 2-for-15 showing in the final period of play. Additionally, the Patriots collected nine offensive rebounds in the contest, which led to multiple second chance opportunities and allowed them to pull away in the final two quarters.

“We shot enough shots to win,” Mississinewa Head Coach Laura Friday said. “We shot a lot. We just didn’t make enough. That’s really the ultimate difference here. We played for each other,” Friday said. “I’m proud of how they played. They fought, but we just [didn’t make] enough shots, and [we didn’t gather]

enough rebounds.”

The two teams went toe-to-toe in the first quarter, with the Patriots taking a 13-9 lead into the first quarter break. A strong second quarter from junior guard Kaiyah Jones, who scored seven of her 10 points in the stanza, helped the Indians tie the game at 21-21.

But the Indians were never able to grab the advantage, and after another Heritage basket a short time later, the Patriots assumed control.

Heritage started the second half on a 7-0 run, increasing their lead to double-digits. And while the Indians were able to put together a small flurry of offense, an 11-4 surge in the final 4:30 of the third quarter, they still trailed by seven, 41-34, heading into the fourth.

The Patriots shut the door in the fourth, outscoring the Indians 15-9 to secure the victory.

Alayna Webb, in her final high school game, led the Indians with 15 points to go along with seven rebounds. Mia Catey also put together a solid performance with 14 points and seven rebounds.

For the Patriots, Shelby Schane scored 14 points, while Ella Bickel scored 13.

Throughout the 2020-2021 season, the Indians dealt with a surplus of adversity. They lost a core piece, Darah Watson, to a



Photo: Alayna Webb scored 15 points to lead the Indians in her final high school game on Wednesday. **Photo by Sean Douglas**

season-ending injury in their home opener. Carly Bolser, a key contributor from last year’s team, opted to focus on volleyball, and therefore, did not come out for the team. Sophomore Karmen Swindall, another player with a ton of upside who had provided glimpses of her potential, missed the last several games of the season due to injury.

As a result of the seemingly constant shuffling of the lineup, players were put into roles they were not comfortable with. But while there were growing pains, there was also a substantial amount of growth. Younger players like Jones and Kate Ramey, together with more senior members of the

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Sevier

them a little bit. That’s not going to be the case with Indiana Tech. They hold them accountable just like we do, and there is a family atmosphere. It’s a winning culture.”

Despite not being able to play his junior year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sevier made tremendous strides this past summer playing for Edwards on the Indiana Prospects travel team, showcasing his speed, athleticism, and his ever-improving offensive production.

“This summer was vital in his development,” Edwards said. “I really saw him progress as a player, and I’m really, really excited for him to get his senior year going.”

Indiana Tech assistant head coach Brent Alwine liked what he saw out of Sevier as well, and wasted little time trying to get him into the fold.

“One, he’s a local kid. We want to own our state with local recruiting,” Alwine said. “Two is his athleticism. Athletes play at the next level. He’s young for his age too, so he is going to mature. His speed will play in our outfield. Having been from this area, and knowing Coach Edwards, he has learned the right way to play baseball. He’s learned the right way to practice and prepare.”

Alwine and Sevier started communications over the summer, and interest ramped up again as the

school year got underway. After visiting the campus and talking with the coaches, Sevier was hooked.

Sevier had two other offers, one to kick at the University of Saint Francis and another to play baseball at Ancilla College, but he quickly realized, with guidance from Edwards, that Indiana Tech was the right place to continue his athletic career.

“Everything that their coaches believe in, I believe in too,” Sevier said. “It’s not about me. It’s about a team effort. That’s what Coach Edwards teaches too. I’m just ready to be part of the team and something great.”

As a young player, Sevier will most likely have to earn playing time, especially early on.

However, having watched him grow as a player, and as a man, over the last four years, Edwards is confident that Sevier is ready to step up to the challenge.

“I like his maturity and where he is going,” Edwards said. “I loved him this summer. He really wasn’t just content with being productive on the field – he wanted to do some things a little bit better. I’m excited [for] him.”

While he acknowledged



his family and his friend for helping him get to this point, Sevier praised his head coach for believing in him, developing him, and preparing him for the next level.

“He’s prepared me big-time for this moment,” Sevier said. “He’s my coach for football and two baseball teams. He’s been the biggest part of my baseball life more than anybody, and also, he developed me into a better man. I can’t thank him enough.”

Sevier still has one more high school season to play, and he is ready to go to war with his teammates this coming spring.

But while he is wearing the blue and gold, he will be thinking about the orange, black, and grey.

“I just wish I could hop in that uniform today and get started,” Sevier said. “I don’t want to say goodbye to baseball, so I’m not going to take it for granted. I’m just going to keep playing and do my thing.”

Eastbrook

as the Panthers were able to get.

Morrison led the Panthers with 14 points to cap off her stellar freshman season, while Goff scored 11 and added five rebounds. Rachel Manning, in her final high school contest, scored seven points, four in the fourth quarter.

While the Panthers will return most of their core next season, they will lose three key seniors.

Manning was a tenacious two-way player throughout her Eastbrook career, playing a significant part in the Panthers’ Sectional 39 championship a season ago. Lexi Binkerd settled into a new role this season, serving as a deep bench piece and a leader for a mostly young squad. And Gabby Scott, while seeing limited minutes, gave everything she had to the program throughout her high school career.

“Rachel has been a contributor for the past three seasons,” Liddick said. “She doesn’t know any effort other than 100 percent. Lexi has been an off-and-on starter for us since she’s been a freshman, and this year, accepted a new role,” Liddick said. “She came in tonight...and gave us all she had. And Gabby, while [she rarely played,] never missed an open gym, never missed a practice, never complained, and came in every day and made her teammates better. She’ll be deeply missed.”

Though the Panthers were unable to defend their Sectional 39 championship, the 2020-2021 campaign was one full of both triumphs and success. They won 15 games, their most since the 2015-2016 season, while also winning their first Grant Four championship in five years.

Most importantly, the Panthers, a group teeming with youth, significantly improved as the season progressed, playing the game of basketball with a maturity well beyond their years and setting the foundation for what could be many successful seasons in the near future for the Eastbrook girls basketball program.

“We talked about that in the locker room after the game, just thinking about how far we’ve come just since that first game against Blackhawk Christian until now,” Liddick said. “A lot of positive things with this group, and they play well beyond their years. The thing I like about that type of maturity is when you’re mature like that as a basketball player, it drives you to get better in the offseason.

“I guarantee with this group, I am not going to have to beg and plead to get a basketball in some-

body’s hands from now until October. I know three or four right now that will be in somebody’s

barn tomorrow shooting a basketball. They are going to be itching to get back into it and get better, and

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again, we should see a lot of positive growth next year with these kids.”

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