

# Golden Eagles close out regular season with win over Blackford

By Sean Douglas

No matter what transpires over the course of a basketball season, to play their best basketball come playoff time is the goal of every team.

And while there were certainly ups and downs throughout the Oak Hill Golden Eagles' 2020-2021 campaign, those tribulations have molded them into a much improved and more confident group, and it showed in their regular season finale — a 46-42 triumph over Blackford, on Thursday evening.

Offensively, the Golden Eagles pushed the tempo all evening long and forced the Bruins to play back on their heels.

“We have picked up the pace, and the girls have really bought into that,” Oak Hill Head Coach Clay Bolser said. “I think they have seen that it’s a little bit more enjoyable and they play a little bit more free. We knew, obviously, with the transition of just changing everything that it was going to take some time. We went through some bumps in the road. [We aren’t] playing perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but we are definitely playing a lot more aggressive offensively. We are getting the ball up and down the floor and thinking a lot less.”

Defensively, they kept a long, athletic Blackford team under wraps, allowing just one double-digit scorer and forcing 18 Bruin turnovers. Additionally, they dominated the glass, out-rebounding the Bruins 39-25 and scoring 13 second-chance points.

“I thought we did a good job of the Leas girl, and we put them in some situations where we made it difficult for them to score.” I thought our press was very effective. There were a lot of positives.”

But most importantly, the Golden Eagles showed resilience, keeping their composure after giving up a nine-point lead in the third quarter, and confidently knocking down their free throws in the game’s most crucial moments.



Carlee Biddle drives into the lane in Oak Hill’s victory over Blackford on Thursday. Photo by Sean Douglas

“Six weeks ago, we... would have lost by 10 or 12 points,” Bolser said. “This group is a very resilient group and has some great leadership. We are going to celebrate the victory, and we will work on what we did wrong tomorrow at practice.”

The two teams were neck-and-neck throughout most of the first quarter, with neither team creating much separation, but two three pointers from Nikki Alston helped the Golden Eagles take a 12-7 lead after the first quarter of play.

Neither team scored much in the second quarter due to turnovers, but the Golden Eagles held on to their advantage. Audrey Leak and Joy McDivitt each hit triples in the quarter, and Oak Hill took a 19-16 lead into the halftime break.

Back-to-back three point plays by Kate Hornocker and McDivitt put Oak Hill up 27-18 at the 5:30 mark of the third quarter, but after that, Blackford made their push. Over the final 5:30 of the period, the Bruins outscored the Golden Eagles 12-2, taking a one-point lead into the final frame.

But Oak Hill never wavered, continuing to stay the course. Throughout the final eight minutes, the Golden Eagles were aggressive to the basket and forced Blackford to foul, which led to 16 trips to the charity stripe. Treniti Thurman scored all six of her points at the foul line, Alston knocked down three of four, and Carlee Biddle added a pair, posi-

tioning the Golden Eagles to secure their third victory in four games.

“If we look at the stats and the way that we were doing that early in the year, I think we were shooting about 45-50 percent from the line as a team,” Bolser said. “Now, the last several games, we’ve been up at 65, 67, and over 70 tonight. That’s a credit to the girls and how they’ve approached this. They haven’t shied away from the fact that we need to improve on things. I’m really pleased with them.”

Alston led the Golden Eagles with 15 points, while McDivitt finished with eight points. Kate Hornocker finished with seven points and a remarkable 15 rebounds, seven on the offensive glass, while Carlee Biddle added seven points, eight boards, four assists, and two steals.

With a little momentum on their side, Bolser and the Golden Eagles are ready to make a little noise in the tournament.

“Our focus on Tuesday is to get to Friday, and then our focus on Friday will be to get to Saturday,” Bolser said. “This group, their mentality, we are not shying away from anybody, and if they beat us, they are going to have to play pretty darn good. I know everybody counts us out right now. A lot of people have counted us out for the entire season. We are pushing to play the best that we can on Tuesday night and see what happens.”

## Round-up — continued from Page 6



Oak Hill finished as sectional champions in the IHSAA wrestlig sectional on Saturday. Photo by Sean Douglas

points in the CIC triumph, while Landen Swanner finished with 15.

For the first time since 2004, the Madison-Grant Argylls picked up regular season victory at Oak Hill, defeating their longtime rival 60-41, clinching, at minimum, a share of the CIC title in the process. Grant Brown led the Argylls with 23 points on eight-of-13 shooting, while Kaden Howell finished with 12 points. Kian Hite led the Golden Eagles with 13 points.

### Saturday, Jan. 29

Oak Hill, after building a 45-29 lead late in the third quarter, scored just two points the rest of the way, as the Lapel Bulldogs pulled off an improbable comeback, outscoring the Golden Eagles 21-2 and hitting the game-winning three at the buzzer to secure a 50-47 victory. Landon Biegel and Caleb Kroll each finished with 11 points apiece to lead the Golden Eagles.

Coming off a historic evening in which Jalen Blackmon became Marion’s all-time scoring leader, the Giants capped the weekend with another victory, defeating the Fort Wayne Northrop Bruins 86-68. Blackmon scored 16 of his 35 points in the fourth quarter to help the Giants pull away. Josh Balfour and Matthew Goolsby each scored 11, while Taden Metzger added 10.

Eastbrook, despite another

solid effort, suffered their fourth straight loss, falling to Taylor 69-62. Stats were not readily made available.

### Boy’s and Girl’s Swimming and Diving

#### Tuesday, Jan. 26

Marion swimming dropped a pair of meets to the Huntington North Vikings on Tuesday evening. The boys were defeated 90-49, while the girls fell 89-71.

#### Thursday, Jan. 28

Oak Hill collected three first place finishes on Thursday evening, but were defeated by the Tipton Blue Devils 104-79. Dalton Scheffer finished first in the 50 Yard Freestyle, Owen Brookshire took first place honors in diving, and Landon White was victorious in the 100 Yard Breaststroke.

### Girl’s Basketball

#### Tuesday, Jan. 26

Madison-Grant started off the final week of the regular season with a victory on Tuesday, defeating the Elwood Panthers 42-26. Daya Greene led the Argylls with 13 points, while Sarah Duncan finished with 11. Azmae Turner rounded out Madison-Grant’s double-digit scorers with 10 points.

Oak Hill also began the week with a win, coming away with a 52-29 triumph over Eastern. Nikki Alston led all scorers with 19 points to go along with four rebounds, two assists, and three steals, while Joy McDivitt shot 100 percent from the field

and charity stripe, scoring nine points. Carlee Biddle added seven points, six rebounds, six assists, and three steals.

#### Thursday, Jan. 28

Madison-Grant wrapped up their regular season with a loss on Thursday evening, falling to the Alexandria Tigers 67-30. Lillie Nelson led the Argylls with 14 points, while Azmae Turner scored 11.

Mississinewa also suffered a loss, falling to Northwestern 56-27 on the road. Stats were not readily made available.

#### Saturday, Jan. 30

Mississinewa ended their regular season with a loss on Saturday afternoon, falling to the Blackford Bruins 63-42. Stats were not readily made available.

### Men’s Baseball

#### Wednesday, Jan. 27

Taylor picked up their third win of the young season on Wednesday in Arizona, defeating RV Arizona Christian by a score of 6-3.

Taylor scored four of their six runs in the first inning. After drawing four walks and a hit by pitch to bring in the first two runs in the contest, Cam Knepp capped off the scoring with a two-out, RBI double.

Nick Rusche scored Knepp with an RBI triple in the seventh inning, and TJ Bass added a little more insurance in the ninth with an RBI double, helping the Trojans to secure the victory.

## Indians — continued from Page 6

it has been a major part of the Indians’ recent success.

“Everyone is getting more comfortable,” Friday said. “I think the girls are playing free. We knew at the beginning of the season as adversity started to hit, we just wanted to be better by the end of the year for sectionals. I think we are accepting that challenge, and I think every single day, we have gotten better. I’m excited about where we are at right now.”

However, while the Indians’ performance was encouraging, Thomas’ performance was even better.

Mississinewa, despite their best efforts, were unable to keep Frankton’s star center under wraps. Thomas led all scorers with 23

points, shooting 11-of-12 from the field, with all her attempts coming from underneath the basket.

While Ramey, Catey, and others did their best to limit her effectiveness, Thomas knocked down her first 11 shots of the contests, with her lone miss coming in the fourth quarter.

“We didn’t have an answer for her,” Friday said of Thomas. “Tonight, they saw the disadvantage with our height, and they took advantage of it.”

Mississinewa led throughout most of the first half, using a combination of efficient offense and determined defense to build their advantage. The Indians took a 12-10 lead after the first quarter, before in-

creasing that advantage to 18-12 with 6:10 to play before halftime.

However, from that moment on, the Eagles slowly turned the momentum in their favor, outscoring Mississinewa 12-3 the rest of the way to turn their six-point deficit into a three-point lead — one they would not relinquish.

After scoring nine points in the second quarter, including Frankton’s final six points, Thomas scored eight more in the third as the Eagles assumed full control. Frankton outscored the Indians 38-16 in the second half, shooting 14-of-26 from the field in the process.

Along with Thomas’ 26 points, Bailee Webb scored

13 points, nine of which came in the fourth, while Ava Gardner added nine.

Despite the final result, Friday was proud of how her team battled from the opening tip to the final whistle. With the girls basketball tournament beginning next week, she hopes, and believes, that the Indians will continue to trend upward.

“The first half of this game, that’s how we want to play every single quarter and every single game,” Friday said. “I think the girls are starting to understand the type of effort they need to put out to get wins and to make sure we compete with everyone. I think we are in a great spot with sectionals coming up.”

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