

Sparks, early three-point shooting lift Winchester over Madison-Grant

By Sean Douglas

Facing off against the Winchester Golden Falcons on Tuesday evening, the Madison-Grant Argylls, and Head Coach Kevin Cherry, knew they had a tall task ahead of them — literally. Despite a valiant effort, the Argylls were unable to contain 6’10” Ball State commit, Peyton Sparks. That, combined with Winchester’s lights out three-point shooting in the opening eight minutes, resulted in a 64-49 defeat, the Argylls’ third of the season.

While only shooting five-of-20 from three in the contest, all five of Winchester’s triples came in the first 4:10. Guard Brooks Burlieson hit on his first three shots, while Dane Sickels and Cooper McCoy recorded the other two, giving the Golden Falcons a lead they would not relinquish. “Winchester came out and played at a really high level to start the game,” Cherry said. “We could have picked up anybody, and we wanted to pick up a high-quality opponent, and we



Kaden Howell finished six-for-seven from the field in Madison-Grant's loss to Winchester on Tuesday evening. Photo by Sean Douglas

definitely did that. Credit Winchester. [They are] a really good basketball team. The Argylls pushed back over the remainder of the first quarter, ending the frame on a 7-0 run, but Sparks quickly found his rhythm and soon became an unstoppable force.

In the second quarter alone, Sparks scored 11 points of the Golden Falcon’s 19 points, which helped Winchester expand their two-point advantage to 11 at the end of the first half. Defensively, Sparks was also dominant, recording three blocks and keeping

the Argylls from finding many great looks in the paint throughout the opening two quarters. Additionally, when the Argylls were able to kick the ball out to the perimeter, shots just would not fall. “Playing against a player like [Sparks,] we stress that it’s important to play off two feet,” Cherry said. “When you draw two defenders, you’ve got to be able to find that open man, and playing off one foot, you limit your options. We stress that, we talk about that, we do that every day in practice, but unfortunately there in the first [half]...we reverted back to some old habits.” Winchester kept up their efficient shooting in the third quarter, knocking down seven of their 10 shots and using an early 12-4 run to keep their double-digit advantage intact. However, the Argylls continued to battle on every single possession. Trailing by 19 after three quarters, Madison-Grant opened the fourth on a 9-3 surge, cutting the Winchester lead to 10 points with 2:42 to play,

but eight more points from Sparks, and some clutch free throw shooting down the stretch, helped the Golden Falcons secure the win. “We just couldn’t grind out that real tough rebound or get that tough stop like we needed to,” Cherry said. “We couldn’t turn them over, and we couldn’t get enough possessions back to try to get back in the game.” Sparks finished the game with 19 points and a remarkable 16 rebounds to go along with three blocks, while Burlieson and Wade Sickels each finished with 14 for the Golden Falcons. Grant Brown, after a tough first half, scored 15 of his team-leading 17 points after halftime to go along with nine rebounds. Kaden Howell put together another strong performance of his own, finishing the contest with 16 points and knocking down six of his seven shot attempts. Jackson Manwell scored six on a pair of threes, while Seth Lugar added six more off the bench. Teagan Yeagy, Chad Harbert, and

Zach Pretorious all received extended minutes, gaining valuable varsity experience for the late season push, and all three contributed in a positive way. “We played a lot of kids tonight,” Cherry said. “Getting a little more depth in our roster is something we wanted to try to focus on tonight as well.” While Cherry was disappointed in the final result, he was proud of his team’s effort against a high quality opponent. Now, he hopes that effort will carry over into Friday night’s contest with Alexandria with the CIC outright championship on the line. “I [told] them to come back in tomorrow ready to prepare,” Cherry said. “It’s a great opportunity to learn. The only way we step backwards is if we don’t learn from tonight and move forward as a program. Coming into this, I told our guys that all of our goals would be intact regardless of whatever happened tonight. And our primary goal this week is to try to go win a conference on Friday.”

Sports schedule

Wednesday, February 17

7 pm—WB—Taylor University @ Indiana Wesleyan University

Thursday, February 18

12 pm—MS—Indiana Wesleyan University @ Concordia University
2 pm—ML—Taylor University @ Saint Ambrose University
5:30 pm—BSD—Marion @ Sectional Preliminaries
5:30 pm—BSD—Oak Hill @ Sectional Preliminaries

Friday, February 19

10:30 am—MTF—Indiana Wesleyan University @ Crossroads League Championship (Day 1)
10:30 am—MTF—Taylor University @ Crossroads League Championships (Day 1)
11 am—W—Marion @ State (First Round)
11 am—W—Oak Hill @ State (First Round)
12 pm—SB—Taylor University @ Campbellsville University (Bear Creek Tournament)

3 pm—MBB—Judson University @ Taylor University
5 pm—SB—Taylor University @ Milligan University (Bear Creek Tournament)
6 pm—MT—Indiana Wesleyan University @ University of Indianapolis
7 pm—W—Marion @ State (First Round)
7 pm—W—Oak Hill @ State (First Round)
7:30 pm—BB—Mississinewa @ Eastbrook
7:30 pm—BB—Lapel @ Madison-Grant
7:30 pm—BB—Harrison @ Marion
7:30 pm—BB—Elwood @ Oak Hill

Saturday, February 20

9 am—BSD—Marion @ Sectional Finals
9 am—BSD—Oak Hill @ Sectional Finals
9:30 am—W—Marion @ State (Quarterfinals)
9:30 am—W—Oak Hill @ State (Quarterfinals)
10:30 am—MTF—Indiana Wesleyan University @ Crossroads League Championship (Day 1)
10:30 am—MTF—Taylor University @ Crossroads League Championships (Day 1)
10:30 am—WTF—Indiana Wesleyan University @ Crossroads League Championship (Day 1)

10:30 am—MTF—Taylor University @ Crossroads League Championships (Day 1)
11 am—SB—Taylor University @ Asbury University (Bear Creek Tournament)
12 pm—MBB—Judson University @ Taylor University
Game 2—MBB—Judson University @ Taylor University

1 pm—BSD—Marion @ Sectional Finals
1 pm—BSD—Oak Hill @ Sectional Finals
1 pm—MB—Mount Vernon Nazarene University @ Indiana Wesleyan University
1 pm—MB—Taylor University @ University of Saint Francis
1 pm—WB—Indiana Wesleyan University @ Mount Vernon Nazarene

University
1 pm—WB—University of Saint Francis @ Taylor University
1 pm—WS—Indiana Wesleyan University @ Aquinas College
1:30 pm—SB—Taylor University @ University of the Cumberland
2 pm—F—Indiana Wesleyan University @ Olivet Nazarene University
5 pm—W—Marion @

State (Consolations)
5 pm—W—Oak Hill @ State (Consolations)
7:30 pm—BB—Eastern @ Madison-Grant
7:30 pm—BB—Huntington North @ Marion
7:30 pm—BB—Bluffton @ Mississinewa
7:30 pm—W—Marion @ State (Championships)
7:30 pm—W—Oak Hill @ State (Championships)



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