

Grant County Sports roundup

Grant County Roundup March 2-8 Boy's Basketball Tuesday, March 2

In the first Sectional 39 quarterfinal, the Eastbrook Panthers, despite a hard-fought effort, saw their season come to an end with a 53-49 loss to the Sheridan Blackhawks. Trailing 14-8 after the first quarter, the Panthers battled back in the second quarter, cutting the Sheridan lead to 23-20 at the halftime break.

Eastbrook was within one possession of Sheridan throughout the second half and trailed 51-48 with 4.3 seconds to play. However, a pair of missed free throws sealed the Panthers' fate. Eastbrook ends the season with a 5-17 record.

In Sectional 23, Mississinewa got the better of longtime rival Oak Hill, punching their ticket to the Sectional 23 Semifinal with a 55-48 triumph.

The Indians built a 17-9 advantage after the first quarter of play behind eight points from Hayden Ulerick, and increased that lead to 33-21 at halftime. Ulerick and Colin Yoder combined for 22 points in the first 16 minutes.

Oak Hill pushed back in the second half, cutting the Indians' lead to four with 38 seconds to play. However, a quick answer from Yoder, combined with a free throw from Landen Swanner, ended the Golden Eagles' comeback bid.

Ulerick led the Indians with 19 points, while Landon Biegel scored a game-high 22 points to lead Oak Hill. The Golden Eagles ended the 2021 campaign with an 11-12 mark.

Football Saturday, March 6

For the second straight week, the Trojans battled against a top-10 opponent right down to the wire, but touchdowns on three straight possessions for the No. 9 Saint Francis Cougars proved to be the difference in a 24-10 win.

The Trojans used a 14-play scoring drive on its



Mississinewa Indians team poses for a photo after winning the Sectional 23 Championship for the first time since 1954.

Photo by Sean Douglas

second possession of the afternoon to put three points on the board. Zane Shilts capped the march with a 37-yard field goal for the early 3-0 Trojan lead.

USF (1-0) answered with a field goal on its next touch and the two sides remained locked at 3-3 at the end of the opening half, thanks to a key strip and recovery from Sam Bartu to deny a USF scoring opportunity.

The TU defense came up with another stop to open the third, but a fumble deep in its own territory set up a Saint Francis touchdown on the next snap. A quick three-and-out from Taylor was followed by another USF touchdown that pushed the hosts' lead to 17-3.

Taylor hit back on its next possession, sparking the drive with a 42-yard connection from Zac Saltzgaber to Drew Bagley and drawing within 17-10 on a one-yard rush to the end zone from Saltzgaber.

That would be as close as the Trojans would get, as Saint Francis scored on its third-straight possession and held on for the 24-10 decision.

Saltzgaber's one-yard touchdown dive was TU's lone touchdown of the afternoon. The senior quarterback also completed eight passes for 118 yards.

The Taylor defense was led by 11 tackles and two hits for lost yardage by Jacob Hockett, with Sam Bolin and Major Dailey each adding nine stops.

TU held Saint Francis to 148 yards through the air and to just two-of-12 on third-down conversions, but the Cougars rushed for 10 first downs on the ground to remain in control.

Meanwhile, in Marion, the IWU Wildcats recorded their first win of the season, defeating No. 22 Siena Heights by a score of 17-10, marking the second win over the Saints in program history.

Xander Stokes completed 18 passes for 185 yards and a pair of touchdowns, while Brayden Smith put together a stellar performance with eight receptions for 121 yards and two touchdowns. Payton Shoemaker led the rushing attack with 44 yards on 10 carries, while Cameron Lauck recorded seven tackles and a fumble.

The Wildcats struck first in the second quarter, as Stokes found Smith for a four-yard score with 6:46 to play in the first half. Siena Heights answered with a field goal, but the Wildcats led 7-3 after the first half of play.

In the third quarter, Stokes and Smith connected

again, this time from 51 yards out, to push IWU's advantage to 14-3. Ben VonGuntен added a 30-yard field goal with 1:36 to play to secure the Wildcats' triumph.

Men's Baseball Wednesday, March 3

In their home-opening series on Wednesday, Indiana Wesleyan picked up a pair of victories, defeating Cleary University 10-4 and 16-15.

In game one, the Wildcats fell behind 3-0 after the first three innings, but RBI singles from MJ Stavola, Tye Thixton, and Colby Jenkins tied the contest at 3-3 in the bottom of the third frame.

The Wildcats broke the game open in the fourth inning, scoring four runs to take a lead they would not relinquish. Thixton and Jenkins each drove in another run, while Tanner Killian and Lucas Goodin also plated a pair of runs.

Goodin finished four-for-four with a double and three RBI, while Thixton also finished with three RBI. Stavola and Thixton each finished with a pair of hits.

In a wild game two, the Wildcats came back from 2-0, 6-5, and 13-11 deficits, using a five-run sixth frame to secure the victory. Denver Blinn scored on a hit-by-pitch, and Stavola

followed with a two-run single to score Goodin and Tanner Killian. A Blake Storr double capped off the scoring, giving the Wildcats a 16-13 advantage.

Cleary scored two more runs in the seventh, but the Wildcats held on for the one-run triumph. Stavola finished with four hits and three RBI, while Bryce Grinder collected four hits and three RBI.

Thursday, March 4

Taylor outscored Goshen, 20-4, in a Thursday afternoon doubleheader at Winterholter Field, sweeping the twin bill with 12-1 and 8-3 victories to extend a six-game win streak and open Crossroads League play at 2-0.

The Trojans pounced early with four runs in the second inning and eight more in the third frame of game one, cruising to a 12-1 mercy-rule win in seven innings. Nine different TU players scored at least one run in the affair with the big blows coming via a TJ Bass grand slam and a Conner Crawford two-run dinger in the third.

Crawford also tripled in the contest, drove in two and scored twice, while Brett Lawson collected two hits with a triple, one run and one RBI.

Joe Moran (4-2) breezed

through six innings of work for his fourth win of the year on the mound, fanning nine Maple Leaf batters without issuing a walk. Moran held Goshen to one run on four hits in the dominant outing.

TU's offense stayed hot in the second game, taking a 2-0 lead two batters into the lineup on a Kade Vander Molen blast and adding another tally for a 3-0 advantage by the end of the first.

The Taylor lead grew to 6-0 before Goshen's only rally of the afternoon plated three runs to cut the edge in half in the top of the sixth. Tucker Waddups entered the game in relief to get out of the jam and finished off the final four outs of the contest for the save.

Vander Molen was the hitting star for TU, going 2-4 with a home run, one double, four RBI, two runs scored and a steal. Ben Kalbaugh and Brett Lawson each also had two hits, with Lawson doubling and scoring twice.

Noah Huseman (2-0) was nearly flawless before running into trouble in the sixth, notching his second win by holding GC to three runs on five hits and one walk over 5.2 innings. Huseman struck out a career-high 10 batters in the start, before handing off to Waddups.

Friday, March 5

Indiana Wesleyan opened up Crossroads League play with a pair of victories on Friday, sweeping Saint Francis 13-2 and 7-6 in a two-game series.

In game one, the Wildcats led from the onset, taking a 6-0 lead after the first four innings of play. IWU added three runs in the fifth and four more in the sixth to secure the 11-run triumph. Colby Jenkins collected three RBI, while Zach Rabe and Tye Thixton each recorded a pair of RBI. Denver Blinn scored three runs, while Rabe and Lucas Goodin each scored twice.

Jon Young went the dis

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Giants

those can be big later on in the game. That third quarter stretch where we missed some shots and they made some shots...we were really in a bind at that point."

The Argylls played great defense on Brown throughout the game, holding him to just 22 points in the contest, but their third quarter struggles proved costly, as they never got any closer than five points to the Bruins the rest of the way.

"I thought if we would hold him to 22, I would tell you that we would have a great chance to win," Cherry said. "If we had made some shots like we made the first time we played them, then I think we are right there in a great position to win that basketball game. But we got down multiple possessions, and it was going to be really tough for us to turn them over. We just couldn't get enough extra posses-

sions back."

In their final high school game, Grant Brown led the way with 18 points, nine rebounds, and four assists, while Kaden Howell finished with 16 points.

While the Argylls' season ended sooner than many imagined, Cherry was pleased with his team's performance throughout the campaign, particularly from his seniors, including Brown, Howell, Moore, and Jackson Manwell.

"Our seniors have just been tremendous all year long," Cherry said. "The legacy they are going to leave, and the culture they have now established at Madison-Grant, they can be extremely proud of. They are going to end up having the lowest defensive average of any team to play at Madison-Grant. They are the first team with an outright CIC championship in school history. Those guys have worked

their rear-ends off to get to where they are at right now.

"This hurts tonight, and

it should hurt as a competitor. But one thing we can live with is that we left it all out on the floor."

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