

# Blackmon continues to climb up scoring chart, Giants fall to Blackhawk

By Sean Douglas

Jalen Blackmon further etched his name into the record books, becoming the second all-time leading scorer in the history of the North Central Conference with his performance against Fort Wayne Blackhawk Christian.

However, Blackmon’s tremendous outing failed to translate to a win, as the Braves scored 50 points in the second half to secure an 87-71 triumph at the Bill Green Athletic Arena on Tuesday night.

Blackmon dominated from start to finish, scoring 39 points on 15-of-27 shooting from the field and seven-of-11 from beyond the arc to go along with six

rebounds. Sitting at 2,064 career points, Blackmon needs just 53 points to pass the legendary Steve Alford to become the NCC’s all-time leading scorer, adding to what has already been a remarkable high-school career.

“He is just going out there and trying to improve every single game,” Marion Head Coach James Blackmon said of his son. “When you think about what he is accomplishing, it says a lot. With some of the players [who have played in the NCC,] it speaks for itself.”

As the season has progressed, Josh Balfour has stepped up his game on both ends of the floor, and his budding confidence was on full display Tuesday. He



Photo: Jalen Blackmon drives inside for the scoop and score in the Giants’ contest against Blackhawk Christian.  
**Photo by Sean Douglas**

was aggressive to the hoop, finishing well through contact, and shot the ball efficiently from all over the

floor.

“He played with a lot of confidence tonight,” Blackmon said. “That’s good

moving forward, so I’m glad to see Josh get it going [again] tonight. If he is playing on both ends of the court, that makes our team better.”

While Blackmon and Balfour shined on the offensive end, the Giants’ defensive play marked their demise.

In the first half, the Giants did an excellent job of containing Blackhawk star center Caleb Furst, holding the Purdue-commit to just six points.

But while they held Furst under wraps, Blackhawk’s shooters found more open space with which to work, and they took advantage. Shooting guard Callan Wood, not known for his scoring, scored 10 in the opening frame, helping

Blackhawk take an 18-13 lead after the first eight minutes.

The two teams continued to battle in the second frame, with neither team leading by more than four points. After scoring just two points in the first quarter, Blackmon began to find his rhythm, scoring 14 in the second quarter, while Balfour, who knocked down a pair of threes in the opening frame, scored seven.

Blackmon’s second three of the quarter briefly gave the Giants the lead at 19-18, but a Blackhawk bucket on their ensuing possession gave the Braves the advantage back for good. Marion was able to keep the contest

See Giants, Page 8

## Indians

lead with 1:40 on the clock. Already one of the best rebounders on the team, Bowser’s offensive game has improved significantly over the past several weeks.

“Braxton has improved a ton,” Allison said. “He’s so physically strong that when he goes into the lane, people are getting to the point where they are bouncing off of him.”

After that, however, the Indians returned to their strengths – Swanner and McClung – and the game turned in their favor.

Swanner, after scoring

just two points in the third quarter, scored five in the fourth, while McClung, after scoring just four points in the first half, scored 14 in the second half, establishing his presence inside against a smaller Eastbrook lineup. McClung missed just one free throw in the fourth quarter and hit on all but one field goal attempt in the second half.

“We’ve got to run through Tai and Landen, and when we do that, we are pretty good,” Reed said. “In the second quarter, when we went away

from that, we struggled. “Obviously, we haven’t been hitting threes very well, other than Landen. Right now, it’s just not time for that, it’s time to get to the basket. We shot three threes in the second half total, and it was a completely different game.”

Additionally, Mississinewa turned up their intensity on defense, forcing five Panthers turnovers in the final eight minutes, which led to several easy baskets in transition.

“They did what a vet-

eran team should do on the road in the fourth quarter,” Allison said. “They went on a run on us, and we had a tough time answering their run.”

The Indians increased their lead from three to 19 points with 3:05 to play, and their lead never fell below double digits the rest of the way.

Swanner ended the contest with a game-high 22 points, while McClung collected 18 points to go along with seven rebounds.

Bowser finished with

17 points to go along with six rebounds, while Harness collected 12 points off the bench for Eastbrook.

As both teams head into the final week of the season, each have different goals.

On one hand, the Indians are looking to return to their high level of play, which allowed for a plethora of success early in the season.

“It’s just going to be up to them in how they handle it and how disciplined they are, especially defensively, for this next week

or two,” Reed said. “We’ve got to play four quarters of inspired basketball.”

And on the other hand, Eastbrook is looking to continue trending in the right direction with the tournament just around the corner.

“We are getting there,” Allison said. “Every coach wants to be peaking around this time. I don’t want to jinx us...but we are getting close. There should be a very confident group in our locker room.”

continued from Page 6

## Mangas

games in NCAA history. But Francis was more than just a tremendous basketball player in a long-forgotten era – he was an even better person. He was humble, never taking too much credit for the team’s success. He cared about his teammates, and he had tremendous humility for a man so gifted in the realm of basketball.

Mangas, much like Bevo, checks all of those boxes.

“I’ve never been close to the fastest, the strongest, the tallest, or the quickest, so I have a deep appreciation for guys who know how to play the game the right way,” Mangas said. “Reading about Bevo Francis and his story, it seems as if he was that type of player. He had a smooth stroke and he could score it from inside and out, and obviously scoring over 100 points in a game is incredible. It’s truly an honor to be recognized for this award.”

In his junior season, Mangas led the Wildcats to a 29-4 record, 17-0 at home, and helped the Wildcats win the

Crossroads League regular season and tournament championships. He averaged 26.9 points, 6.4 rebounds, and 4.2 assists per game, while shooting 55 percent from the field and 83 percent from the line. He was named the Crossroads League Player of the Week six times and the NAIA Player of the Week twice. He was named the Crossroads League Player of the Year for the third consecutive season, while also being named a First Team NAIA All-American and the NAIA D-II National Player of the Year.

“I’ve told people that he is remarkably effective and efficient. He works so hard and plays so hard on both ends of the court. I’ve now been involved in college basketball for 25 plus years in various capacities, and I’ve watched a lot of college basketball. During my 25 plus years of observing NAIA basketball, Kyle is the most consistently effective and efficient NAIA player I’ve ever seen — the most efficient, effective,

and consistent player in this entire generation.”

But Mangas’ greatness goes behind his sheer talent and basketball IQ. He’s a tremendous basketball player, without question, but an even better person. That is what stuck out to McCarthy most about Mangas as he went through the selection process.

“At this point, I’ve watched 50-plus Indiana Wesleyan games, and I’ve watched closely,” McCarthy said. “Myself, and others, have done a tremendous amount of research on Kyle on and off the court. I’ve learned that Kyle is quiet, humble, and kind, and an incredible teammate. I’ve watched him on the bench cheering on his teammates. I’ve watched him and learned about Kyle as a human being. He’s respectful of his teammates, and he is respected by teammates.”

Mangas, along with thanking his coaches, his teammates, past and present, and his family for helping him to get to this point,

he also thanked Indiana Wesleyan for giving him the chance to play the game he loves and be immersed in a culture that is bigger than basketball.

“I knew IWU was the right fit from the beginning. It’s been so fun to play in a culture that emphasizes qualities such as fearlessness, selflessness, and joy-

fulness,” Mangas said. “When you choose to be a part of Indiana Wesleyan basketball, you are choosing to be a part of something bigger than yourself.”

continued from Page 6

## Your Source for Agricultural Trailers!

### M.H. Eby Inc.

2909 W 300 S  
Logansport, IN 46947  
(574) 753-4000

### Introducing the new generation Eby Grain Hopper

### Eby - GN, BH & Semi Livestock Trailers, Car & Utility Trailers, & Flatbeds for pickup

Sales for Frankfort, Marion, Peru, Wabash & Huntington  
Please contact Mark Simmons  
(765) 860-7297

For Parts & Service contact  
Troy Miller or Jimmy Martin  
(574) 753-4000

We offer parts and service on most trailers.