

Marion falls to Huntington North on Senior night

By Sean Douglas

Throughout their Senior Night contest against Huntington North on Saturday, the Marion Giants lacked a discernible rhythm.

Whether due to the emotion-filled Senior Night festivities celebrating the careers of four-year players and their contributions to a program or the fatigue of playing their third game in four nights, the Giants failed to get on track, proving costly in a 58-50 loss to the Vikings at the Bill Green Athletic Arena.

"[They] controlled the tempo," Marion Head Coach

James Blackmon said. "We played way below our average."

Marion shot just 16-of-45 in the contest, including a paltry six-of-25 from three-point range, and only had one double-digit scorer – Jalen Blackmon – who scored 29 points.

The Giants got off to a strong start, as seniors Sean Flynn and Jake McCarthy each hit threes in the first four minutes of the opening stanza to give Marion an early 8-2 lead. However, Huntington North took over after that and never relinquished control. Behind four three-pointers from guard Zach Hubartt, the Vikings ended the

first quarter on a 14-2 run to take a lead they would hold the rest of the way.

"We just have to find out what motivates us," Blackmon said. "When you are in that locker room talking about Senior Night, that's a special night. You would think it would get a little more energy for that type of moment. If you don't come to compete, anybody can beat you."

The Vikings' higher energy level combined with their strong rebounding, helped them create easy scoring chances and more opportunities to score points throughout the evening. Despite being a much smaller

team, the Vikings outrebounded the Giants 34-24, 10 of which came on the offensive glass.

"When you let a small team rebound you, you give them more opportunities to hold the ball," Blackmon said. "We have to get those 50-50 balls. If we are more athletic than another team, if we are faster than another team, we have to use that to our advantage. I didn't think we did until the last five minutes of the ball game."

Early in the second quarter, the Giants cut the Huntington lead to one point 16-15, but the Vikings pushed that lead back to nine late in the frame, taking advantage of Marion's inability

to score. Blackmon hit a three at the buzzer, but the Giants still trailed 27-21 at halftime.

Marion's offensive woes continued in the third quarter, as the team made just three field goals. Huntington North led by as many 11 points in the frame, before taking an eight-point advantage into the final frame.

Finally, in the final five minutes of the contest, the Giants began to stir, particularly Blackmon, who scored 15 of his 29 points in the final stanza. However, the Vikings put the game away at the foul line, knocking down 14 of their 18 attempts in the fourth quarter to secure the upset victory.

For the game, the Vikings shot 80 percent from the charity stripe, finishing the game 20-of-25 from the line.

"It was a good learning experience for us," Blackmon said. "If we can have that type of energy throughout the ball game, that's where we want to be. When we start the new season, we will be able to take care of teams like that."

Josh Balfour scored six points to finish as the Giants' second leading scorer, while Matthew Goolsby scored four.

For Huntington, Hubartt led the way with 23 points, while Will Hotchkiss collected 16 points.

Giants

within two possessions the rest of the first half, but the Braves went into the locker room with a 37-34 edge.

After not attempting a shot in the second quarter, Wood picked up right where he left off, making all four of his three-point attempts and turning a three-point lead into a nine-point cushion for the Braves at the end of the third quarter. Wood finished the contest with 22 points, 17 more than his scoring average.

"We let a guy who averaged five points a game get 22 tonight. You've got to pick your [poison], and we picked our poison by letting [Wood] shoot," Blackmon said. "He made some shots in the second half that got them going and [allowed them to] get that little cushion."

Additionally, Furst began to find his rhythm

after halftime. While Wood was making it rain from the perimeter, Furst took over in the post, scoring seven points and enforcing his will underneath the glass.

"We definitely wanted to eliminate second chance shots," Blackmon said. "The first half was great, but in the second half, we let him get those high percentage shots."

The Braves put the contest away in the fourth quarter, outscoring the Giants 17-6 in the opening 4:38 of the period to build a double-digit advantage they would hold the rest of the way.

Four of the Braves' five starters finished in double figures. Along with Wood's 22 points, Furst collected a double-double with 21 points and 13 rebounds. As a team, the Braves dominated the glass, outre-


bounding the Giants 37-19, while shooting 22-of-33 (66 percent) from the

floor in the second half. Balfour finished with 18 points and four re-

bounds for the Giants, while Matthew Goolsby scored six and both Jer-

maine Woods and Rodney Gipson scored three.

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