Written by Staff Reports
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DELPHOS — The Jefferson boys basketballers had not played a home game at "The Stage" since last season, so Friday night's Northwest Conference clash versus Ada was welcome for head coach Marc Smith and his young charges.

The fans in attendance got their money's worth as it came down to the final seconds, where freshmen Trey Smith hit a close-in shot with six ticks left to cap off a Wildcat comeback and help secure a 47-46 triumph.

A last-gasp 26-footer by the Bulldogs was awry and Jefferson (3-6, 1-1 NWC) got the rebound to seal the deal.

The Red and White rallied from a 39-32 deficit to start the fourth and a 7-point hole in the last 2 1/2 minutes.

"We were dead in the water that late. We had just lost (sophomore) Nick (Fitch) to his fifth foul and around the same time, (junior) Ross (Thompson) rolled his ankle making a diving hustle play; in place of those two starters in the post, we had a senior (Seth Wollenhaupt) and a freshman (Dylan Hicks)," Coach Smith noted. "This was truly a gutty, gritty performance by the kids. They never lost their poise or panicked; they didn't start to jack up bad shots when we were behind."

The Wildcats were forced to foul later in the game, accounting for some of its foul trouble. However, they still managed to slap on some full-court man-to-man pressure that forced three turnovers in Ada's last four possessions. One of those was Thompson's (7 points) hustle play that led to a basket by senior Seth Ricker (8 markers, 5 dimes) that made it 44-40.

Later on, Hicks scored his first varsity basket to get the Red and White within two with 23 ticks remaining.

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Then the freshman Smith took the ball into the paint and his a 4-footer from in front that gave the host the lead.

The game before then was back and forth.

Ada took a 19-12 lead only to see the hosts outscore their foe 16-6 in the second period to take a 28-25 edge.

"Ada started off well and seemed to be dominating and then we answered back and seemed to have things going our way. It seemed like the whole game was like that; neither team could consistently get going and the other team replied," Coach Smith said.

Delphos could not build on that second-period play as they were controlled 14-4 in the third canto to trail 39-32 to start the ultimate period.

"We were hurting in the third: we only had three field-goal attempts in the period and turned it over the rest of the time," Coach Smith continued. "We didn't panic, though; that was key. We got a lot of contributions from a lot of players; the effort was outstanding. We needed to force turnovers down the stretch and we did that. Ada ran a lot of time off the clock in the last quarter, trying to shorten the game — They had one possession they took over a minute off — but we never lost discipline defensively. The whole game was a credit to the kids, how hard they played and how they just battled to win it."

The hosts shot 18-of-37 from the field — 3-of-8 beyond the arc — for 48.6 percent and 8-of-11 singles (72.7%). Smith led the offense with 15 markers and Austin Jettinghoff added eight. They hauled down 28 boards, seven offensive, as Thompson finished with seven and Fitch and Hicks five each. Jettinghoff dished three assists and Smith and Thompson grabbed three thefts each. They committed 17 errors and 14 fouls.

Next up for the Wildcats is a Friday game at home versus LCC.

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Ada (3-6) was led by Dumbaugh with 19 and Archer 14. They downed 19-of-45 from the floor (4-of-17 downtown) for 42.4 percent and 4-of-9 at the free-throw line (44.4%). They collected 23 caroms (10 offensive), 14 miscues and 15 fouls.

In junior varsity action, Ada won the middle two period 25-13 to help secure a 39-35 triumph.

Grant McBride led the Bulldogs with 19.

For Delphos (2-6), Tyler Rice led the Wildcats and all scorers with 23.