

DELPHOS — St. John's senior Curtis Geise had a bittersweet night.

He became the 13th Blue Jay boys basketball player to reach the 1,000-point mark for his varsity career Friday night against Midwest Athletic Conference rival (and Division III's top team) St. Henry before the home folks at Robert A. Arnzen Gymnasium.

That was good.

The bad; the Redskins came out in the first period with a 20-9 spread and then held off every Blue Jay rally to emerge with a 71-57 victory to take over sole possession of the league lead (15-1, 5-0 MAC).

"It's a great honor no matter what; you dream about it as a kid growing up and it's a special moment. You work hard for it and get better and learn more about the game as you grow up," Geise noted. "We weren't really thinking or talking about it all week; we aren't focused on individual goals but team goals. It stinks that we couldn't win the game; I'd have traded a win for the mark."

His head coach, Aaron Elwer, spoke about his senior.

"He reached a big plateau here with his 1,000th point but it was a tough night," he said. "He has been playing extremely well for us this year and has been a 4-year varsity player for me. He has steadily improved all four years."

St. Henry shot a stellar 26-of-46 from the floor (3-of-14 3s) for 56.5 percent versus the Blue Jays (9-4, 4-1 MAC) mark of 20-of-55 (6-of-14 downtown) for 36.4%.

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It started right away for the visitors. Geise hit two throws at 6:32 to start the scoring but the Redskins' 6-6 senior Kyle Stahl (22 markers, 13 boards, 3 blocked shots) tied it with a deuce at 6:16. Eric Clark gave the Jays their final lead of the night with a basket but Alex Post (a double-double with 16 markers and 13 assists) hit a 3-ball at the 5-minute mark to give the Redskins the lead for good, 5-4. It then became the Ryan Mikesell show. The 6-5 sophomore (9 boards) dropped in 11 of his 15 points in those final minutes of the first period, including a pair of crucial 3-pointers, as the Redskins roared out to a 20-7 edge in Post's slice to the basket at 1:08. Clark (13 counters, 3 bombs) hit a pair of free tosses at 26.8 seconds to get the Blue and Gold within 20-9.

"We've been fortunate enough to get off to good starts in most of our games, especially when we were playing well overall. Not tonight," Elwer continued. "They just came out with a very efficient offense from the start; it's the most efficient offense we have faced yet this year. With the things they do so well, if you make a defensive mistake, they take advantage of it. They don't turn the ball over and they force your defense to really be on its toes and play well." St. Henry hit 8-of-12 shots in the opener to the Jays' 2-of-15.

Redskin coach Eric Rosenbeck credits the key good start to senior leadership.

"You want to get off to a good start on the road, especially here. We have a group of exceptional passers and when we're running our offense as we can, we're very effective," Rosenbeck explained. "Kyle is such a load inside and when Ryan hit those jumpers in the first period, St. John's really couldn't defend the paint alone; that opened it up for Kyle inside."

The Blue Jay defense did a better job on the Redskin offense in the second period, holding them to 5-of-11 shooting and containing their penetration and cuts to the basket. Unfortunately, the lengthy St. Henry defense — mainly a man-to-man look that assigned people like Mikesell to the 5-10 Geise — was making things very difficult for the Jays to get open looks. It seemed even when they got them from inside the lane, they struggled to find the range. Thus, when Stahl took a lob from Post to the glass with 1:31 showing on the clock, that gave the Redskins a 30-18 halftime edge.

The third canto was more of the same and in even greater favor of the visitors. Stahl got even more untracked with three baskets, all on feeds from his personal assist man, Post; and soared to a 38-20 edge on a Post-to-Stahl lob at 5:05, forcing Elwer to call a halt. The Jays replied with a mini-rally, getting within 44-30 on a short banker from sophomore Andy Grothouse (9

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markers) with 40 ticks on the board.

Geise, who needed 10 points entering the contest to reach the millennial mark and had seven to that point, took a pass from Clark and rose up for a 3-ball from right of the key with 7:48 left to get his 1,000th point. The Jays were not done and went to a full-court scramble-like defense to try to get back in the game. They battled back — with senior Ryan Buescher getting going with 10 of his 14 game points in the fourth and Geise tacking on 10 of his 17 — to within 55-48 on a 3-ball by Clark at 3:52. However, the free-throw line — which had not been kind to the Redskins up to this game as they hit at a 56.6-percent clip — became their best friend; a 15-of-17 performance in the stanza (16-of-19 for the game for 84.1%), with Post hitting 5-of-6 to lead the way. Stahl counted eight points and Post and Kent Hemmelgarn (11 markers) added seven to keep the Blue Jays at bay and seize the MAC lead.

"We kept battling back. We got within seven there in the fourth but when you are playing uphill the whole way, you use up a lot of energy," Elwer added. "You just can't fall that far behind a great offensive team like St. Henry and expect to have a lot of success."

In toto, the Redskins assumed 35 rebounds (6 offensive); and compiled 13 errors and 16 fouls. They host New Bremen Friday.

"I remember when (former coach) Fran (Guilbault) was coaching; you had to shoot 25 free throws at the end of each practice and when you did well, you were rewarded with candy and Gatorade at the end of the week. Since we've gone back to that, we've been much better at the line, meaning the kinds like candy and Gatorade," Rosenbeck joked.

St. John's netted 11-of-15 singles (73.3%); tracked down 23 caroms (9 offensive) as Geise, Buescher and fellow senior Seth Bockey had four each; and added 10 miscues and 18 fouls. They host Spencerville tonight (6 p.m.).

In junior varsity action, St. Henry (11-5) started well en route to a 61-32 rout.

Caleb Bender and Evan Lefeld led the Redskins with 14 markers each and A.J. Niekamp added



