

Press Clippings 02-13-21 to 02/16/21

---Press Clippings---02/16/2021

There are no U-46 related news stories.

---Press Clippings---02/15/2021

There are no U-46 related news stories.

---Press Clippings---02/13/2021

There are no U-46 related news stories.

SPORTS

---The Courier-News--- 02/14/2021

Wheeler-Thomas, Larkin push pace in conference opener

Junior point guard scores 11 of 21 points in 2nd half as Royals pull away from Glenbard East

By: Paul Johnson



Larkin's Damari Wheeler-Thomas (10) tries to get past Glenbard East's Sean Banks (44) and Dylan Alejandro (31) during the fourth quarter of an Upstate Eight Conference game on Friday. (Brian O'Mahoney/The Beacon-News)

During an impassioned halftime speech Friday night, Larkin coach Deryn Carter reminded his team how he wants them to play. And the Royals responded.

Led by junior point guard Damari Wheeler-Thomas, Larkin pulled away from Glenbard East for a 64-47 victory in an Upstate Eight Conference opener.

The game was 38-38 late in the third quarter when things turned for the Royals (1-1), who went on a 26-6 spurt. Wheeler-Thomas scored 11 of his game-high 21 points in that span.

“It was the pace, moving on offense, talking on ‘D,’ no second-chance points, all that,” Wheeler-Thomas said. “Easy buckets, that was a big halftime speech — transition, push the ball up.”

Carter attributed some of Larkin’s early struggles to it being the first conference game of a shortened season. His starters also played extended minutes.

In his mind, it goes deeper than that, however.

“Everybody knows our season was postponed, but every coach would tell you that what really hurts is not having the summer,” Carter said. “Our guys forget how fast we want to play, how little difference there is between jogging and actually running.

“We had a much better rhythm going in the second half, and that’s a good sign.”

The 6-foot Wheeler-Thomas said he added about 15 to 20 pounds of muscle in the offseason and also got taller, giving his game even more physicality entering his third varsity season.

But Friday was his first extended minutes of the young season. He has been recovering from a hip flexor injury.

“I still have to keep working on defense,” Wheeler-Thomas said. “I think that’s the biggest thing.”

Junior guard Fernando Perez Jr. also scored 10 of his 16 points in the decisive run for the Royals.

Carter is hoping to see more of those bursts from Perez, Wheeler-Thomas and junior guards Dontrell Maxie and Jamarion Stubbs.

“I hope to get better,” Carter said. “We expect better from all of them, honestly. They all gave us bits (Friday). But they didn’t give us extended stuff.”

Wheeler-Thomas is in the middle of his recruiting process, getting looks from mid-major colleges. These games could be critical as he looks for his future home.

“I’d say it slowed down a lot, but this helps us with getting tape out to coaches,” Wheeler-Thomas said. “It definitely does.

“I would say we’re grateful because at first we didn’t have (a season), and now we do. Just getting out there is good for everybody.”

Carter said while the games are big for Wheeler-Thomas, he already has an established name in recruiting circles.

These games could be even more important for a player like Perez.

“His name is not out there yet,” Carter said. “It will be by the end of the year.”

Carter was happy to see his team put together a solid second half.

With only a conference championship as the carrot at the end of the regular season, Carter was impressed Friday with the Royals' resiliency.

"We told our guys, it's a nine-piece pie," Carter said. "We got one of the pieces right here. It wasn't the prettiest, but when you're trying to win championships, you'll take it."