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SPORTS SECTION

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Lyn, Larkin stun St. Charles North in final seconds

BY JOHN LEMON



Larkin's Anthony Lynch glides through the St. Charles North defense Friday in St. Charles. Lynch scored 30 points including the game-winning basket with 2 seconds left in a 51-50 win. John Starks | Staff Photographer

Both Larkin and St. Charles North entered Friday night's Upstate Eight River tilt without a conference loss, and both did everything they could to stay that way.

The lead changed hands four times in the final 30 seconds -- and nearly a fifth -- when Brendan Dal Degan's 25-footer hit off the back rim at the buzzer.

Larkin senior Anthony Lynch was the difference, scoring 21 of his career-high 30 points in the second half of the Royals' 51-50 victory.

That included 6 points in the final 53 seconds, capped with a coast-to-coast layup with 2 seconds to go and his team down a point after Zach Ludwig had given the North Stars a 50-49 lead with 2 free throws with :6.8 remaining.

"I just wanted to get a quick bucket," Lynch said. "If they stop me I was going to pull up. If they didn't I was going all the way. That's the type of team we are, we keep fighting no matter what."

No. 3 Larkin (9-4, 5-0) had to fight from behind nearly all night including a 35-23 deficit in the third quarter after one of Erik Larson's three 3-pointers.

The Royals turned up the defensive pressure behind Kindrel Morris, yet still trailed 39-32 after three quarters.

No. 7 St. Charles North (9-6, 3-1) -- playing without starting forward Cade Callaghan (concussion) and top reserve Tyler Nubin (football combine in Texas) -- also saw Ludwig go to the bench with four fouls for most of the fourth quarter and leading scorer Kyle King sit late in the third with three fouls and a twisted left ankle after an awkward fall following a layup.

King came back and finished the game, scoring the first basket of the fourth quarter. Down 41-32 with five minutes left, Pierre Black sank a 3-pointer to start Larkin's comeback, and Lynch and Morris scored transition layups to bring the Royals within 43-41.

King drove and kicked out to Larson for a corner 3 and a 46-41 lead with 3:10 left, but the Royals kept pressuring. Jalen Shaw scored, then came up with a steal and pass ahead to Morris for a layup to trim North's lead to 46-45 with 2:06 remaining.

King hit 2 free throws for a 3-point cushion only to see Lynch's drive bring the Royals back within 48-47. After North missed a 1-and-1 with 33 seconds left, Lynch's tip-in gave the Royals a 49-48 lead -- their first since early in the second quarter.

"At shootaround I said Anthony is going to have to have a special night because I knew how they were going to hound Jalen and he did," Larkin coach Deryn Carter said. "He had a special night. He looked like what he is, one of the best players in the state."

Larkin had no timeouts left after Ludwig's free throw gave North the lead with 6 seconds remaining. Lynch took the inbounds pass and drove right through what had been a stifling North Star defense most of the night.

"He got a head steam," King said. "We didn't load up. Our coaches talk all the time about loading up the side the ball is coming down and of course that's the one play we didn't. He just drove all the way down. I was there, I should have stepped in but it was kind of tough."

Shaw, Larkin's 6-foot-10 center, sat for the first four minutes after being sick for Thursday's practice. He hit a baseline jumper to tie the score at 13 after one quarter, then the North Stars held Larkin to 3 points in the second quarter to take a 20-16 halftime lead.

Dal Degan opened the third quarter with a 3-pointer, and Larson's steal and layup moments later forced a Carter timeout with the North Stars in control up 27-16.

The Royals also came from double-digits down in the third quarter to beat St. Charles East.

"We just bring the ball down one side of the floor we're easy to guard," Carter said of the first half. "We moved the ball a lot better in that second half. Very proud of our guys how they responded to a lot of adversity. Huge win."

Shaw finished with 7 points, 10 rebounds, 3 steals and 2 blocked shots.

King and Larson each scored 17 points for the North Stars, and King grabbed 10 rebounds helping North to a 29-21 edge. They shot 46.3 percent (19-41) from the field to Larkin's 44.1 percent (19-43), and the Royals also overcame an 11-for-22 night at the free-throw line.

"It's tough when you play better and you control the game and for 28 minutes you execute your defensive game plan and hold a team like that to 51 points and you pretty much hand them the basketball game in a short spell there," said North Stars coach Tom Poulin, who second-guessed himself for not calling a timeout after Ludwig's free throw to set his defense.

"I'd rather he (Lynch) shoot free throws than a layup. You can't let the kid get from one end line to the rim. I think for 28 minutes we were a better basketball team. For whatever reason in that 4-minute stretch we got sped up and made some poor decisions."

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South Elgin holds off East Aurora's rally

BY CRAIG BRUESKE

As time wound down in the third quarter, South Elgin's boys basketball team needed to create some separation during Friday night's game against East Aurora.

Trailing 34-33 with 1:39 left in the third quarter, South Elgin (10-3, 2-1) finally put together its first run of the game -- a 10-0 surge that catapulted the Storm to a 43-35 lead heading into the final period.

From there, South Elgin escaped the Tomcats' furious comeback bid down the stretch during its 60-54 Upstate Eight Conference Valley Division victory in Aurora.

"We stayed with what we were doing the whole game, getting up and pressuring a little bit," said Storm coach Brett Johnson. "We finally got the rotations correctly and we made them make a couple mistakes. That's what sparked that run."

Noah Rohr (8 points, 6 rebounds) began the run by knocking down a 3-pointer off a feed from David Binion to give the Storm the lead for good at 36-34.

After Rohr's turnaround jumper extended the margin to 38-34, junior guard Drake Montgomery tallied the final 5 points of the third quarter, including a 3-point play with 20 seconds remaining off a hustle steal and brilliant behind-the-back pass from teammate Trace Ashby near the scorer's table.

"It started with a three and a couple steals," said Johnson. "That's what we were looking for."

"We got the momentum going in the third quarter," said Montgomery, who scored a game-high 23 points. "That's a big point in the game -- the end of the third quarter going into the fourth quarter."

East Aurora battled back, trimming its deficit to 3 at 57-54 on a 3-pointer from Davonta Faulkner (15 points) with 27 seconds left before Montgomery's layup off a baseball-type pass from Binion with 18 seconds remaining sealed the decision.

"We did a great job of breaking their press," said Johnson. "We drew up the home run play and it worked. It got us the two points we needed and gave us a little extra cushion."

Junior Vince Miskiewicz finished with 18 points, 16 rebounds and 5 blocked shots for the Storm, while Binion added 5 points, 5 assists, 4 rebounds and solid defensive play against Tomcats junior Jules Williamson (15 points).

"The stat sheet never shows it but Binion was just phenomenal," said Johnson. "The charge he had, the rebounds he was getting, and he made some good decision making on inbound passes, and not being bigger than the moment. He was invaluable."

Ashby contributed 6 points and 3 steals for the Storm.

"It was a great way to start the year," said Johnson. "That was a fun game to coach and watch the kids play. Every game should be like that the rest of the way."

South Elgin plays host to West Aurora next Friday night.

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Bartlett pulls out OT win over Rams

BY SCOTT SCHMID

Jim Wolfsmith was extremely proud of his Bartlett boys basketball team after winning four of five games at the Jacobs Holiday Classic.

With Friday night's effort, that level of pride continued to grow.

Still playing without leading scorer Ben Tompson, the Hawks saw an early lead slip away before pulling out a 65-64 overtime win in an Upstate Eight Valley matchup in Lombard.

Tomas Vikonis made 2 free throws with 12.5 seconds left in the extra session to give the visitors the victory. The senior guard finished with a game-high 21 points.

"I was confident in my shot," said Vikonis about the game winning makes from the charity stripe. "I knew I could hit them. The (loud) crowd gets me excited, it doesn't get me down at all.

"We kind of came in with a chip on our shoulders. Last year we were on top of the conference and lost to these guys here. This was our chance to get back at them."

For the host Rams, the close defeat has become all too familiar. After starting out the season with a record of 5-2, Glenbard East (6-9, 1-2) has now lost 7 of 8 games, many in strikingly similar fashion. This time around, the squad battled back from an 18-4 first quarter deficit, slicing that margin to 10 by halftime before pulling within 42-38 heading into the final eight minutes.

Kenny Adams, who topped the Rams with 20 points, had a chance to win it in overtime but his jumper bounced off the rim as time expired. Adams had tied the game at the end of regulation with two made free throws.

"I thought we put ourselves in a hole in the first quarter," Glenbard East coach Scott Miller said. "But we did a nice job fighting back, and we did it with our defense. That is one of the things we have been talking about and our defense is getting better. We just have to keep playing."

Austin Gates chipped in with 18 points for Bartlett (8-7, 2-1), and Ben Fisher also checked into double figures with 12. Byron Price added 9.

"Any time you can come out with a win in a gym like this with an atmosphere like that is a good thing," Wolfsmith said. "You know they are going to go on runs and hit some 3s and get some turnovers. But in the end, our guys who are supposed to do things, did those things.

"The kids have been playing well and they have been sharing the ball as a team. They are still trying to find their roles a little bit with Ben's injury but every game we are gaining more experience for our guys, especially our bench players."

Alijah Nelson scored 16 points for the Rams and Korvante Davis contributed 11, including a jumper which put his team ahead by 1 with 22 seconds remaining in overtime.