

DEFENSE FIRST

Big Foot boys basketball wins Regional opener

TRAVIS DEVLIN
tdevlin@lakegenevanews.net

A strong night defensively, especially in the second half by the Big Foot boys basketball team, led the way to a 55-31 victory over Racine Lutheran (Metro Classic) in the opening round of the Division 3 WIAA Regional Tournament on Tuesday night, March 1, at Big Foot High School.

Racine Lutheran senior guard Julian Ramsey began the scoring in the game with a three-point make from the corner on their opening possession. A couple possessions later, Big Foot junior guard Eli Gerdes responded on the other end with a three-pointer from the top of the key to tie things up. Racine Lutheran senior forward Gavin Zawicki, who averaged 14.5 points-per-game this season to lead his team, got his first and only bucket to fall on a short range floater to briefly take the lead of 5-3 early in the first.

Big Foot senior forward Gus Foster, the all-time leading scorer in Big Foot High School basketball history, got an and-1 to go while he was fouled in the act of shooting with 12:25 remaining in the first to give the Chiefs their first lead of the lead of the game at 6-5. That lead went back and forth the next few possessions before Foster again got another and-1 to go after he got the defender to bid on the fake and convert the layup while being fouled. He added the free-throw to complete the three-point play to take a 11-10 lead with just over 10 minutes left in the first.

From that point forward, Big Foot never lost the lead the rest of the game.

Big Foot sophomore Hudson Torrez assisted on the next two makes by junior forward Evan Penniman and senior forward Tyler Wilson down low in the post. Senior forward Alex Schmitz briefly stretched the lead to 18-12 with 7:30 to go after he drained a three-pointer from the top of the key.

A short time later, Racine Lutheran junior guard Eric Ibarra got the Crusaders back within three, but Foster knocked down his only three-pointer of the game on the other end. That was followed up by a corner three by Racine Lutheran junior Eric Rossa to get



Big Foot senior forward Gus Foster goes around two Racine Lutheran defenders for an attempted layup in the WIAA Division 3 Regional opener on Tuesday night, March 1, at Big Foot High School.



Big Foot senior forward Alex Schmitz shoots a three-point shot from the corner in the regional game against Racine Lutheran on Tuesday, March 1, at Big Foot High School.

back within three at 22-19. But for every make Racine Lutheran had, Big Foot responded. It wasn't a three-pointer from Foster this time, the 6'3 senior instead got around a triple team of defenders down low in the post to get the contested layup to fall.

Torrez got a steal with just over a minute in the half for the easy

fast-break layup. Gerdes dropped his second three-pointer with 18 seconds left to take a 29-23 lead into the locker room.

After Ibarra got a layup to go to open up the scoring in the second half, Big Foot went on an 8-0 run to stretch their lead to 12 before Racine Lutheran head coach Justin Hullum called a timeout with

12:57 remaining in the game.

Coming out of the timeout, Racine Lutheran Camdin Jansen converted on a layup before Torrez and Foster connected on back-to-back layups at the 9:27 mark. Racine Lutheran added just one bucket before Big Foot head coach Hunter Price called a timeout with 8:36 left in the game with the Chiefs' holding a score of 40-29.

In those final eight and a half minutes, Big Foot's defense held their ground. They outscored the Crusaders 15-2 with Racine Lutheran's only basket coming on a steal and layup by Rossa with 2:15 remaining in the contest. Wilson added the final three points for Big Foot on a layup and by converting on one of two free-throws to earn their 24-point victory.

"We were focused and locked in, Price said. "This is a team that is 100% bought in on each other and this process from the get-go. We have taken our lumps the last few years, but this was a really big game for us."

Foster led his team with 24 points and Wilson had 11. Torrez

finished with seven, Gerdes with six and Schmitz had five, matching his number five jersey number. Penniman finished with two.

Ibarra had 11 points to lead the Crusaders in scoring. Ramsey and Rossa both had seven while three players all had two points each.

Other regional games

Tuesday, March 1

Boys: Williams Bay 50, Palmyra-Eagle 42.

Williams Bay junior Owen King had 16 points followed by senior Henry Mannelli with 14. Senior Colin Kuiper had nine and junior Kelton Randall had six. Junior Elian Valadez had three and senior Aiden Hoover finished with two. Williams Bay defeated Palmyra-Eagle 68-45 back on Feb. 25.

Boys: Badger 64, Milwaukee Reagan 42.

Senior Ty McGreevy led his team with 21 points, junior Brad Lyons had 18 and senior Max Zukowski had 12. Senior Kaleb Maloney finished with eight, senior Nathan Buntrock with 3 while Dylan Cataldo and Cade Scheide-man each had two.

'Now March Madness starts': Overachieving Wisconsin men's basketball team prepares for postseason

ABBY SCHNABLE
aschnable@madison.com

Members of the University of Wisconsin men's basketball team will tell you that they knew this team was going to be successful back in the summer.

Others weren't so sure. When the Badgers were picked to finish 10th in the media preseason, players accepted it as a challenge to prove how good they are.

The feeling only solidified after they won the Maui Invitational in November.

"We knew that this was a team that was going to be able to have a lot of success and win a lot of games just because of the identity that we were starting to form," Brad Davison said. "That connectedness, that toughness, that gritty way of playing."

UW secured at least a share of the Big Ten regular-season title when it defeated Purdue 70-67 on Tuesday. The Badgers swept the regular season series with the Boilermakers and needed just one more win to claim the title outright.

Fans stormed the court Tuesday and Big Ten championship T-shirts were handed out as confetti rained down on the team.

"Before we even started celebrating in the locker room, the first thing we were talking about was we didn't want to share this with anybody," Chris Vogt said Sunday. "Staying locked in. We wanted to win it outright."

But UW lost to Nebraska on Sunday, and Vogt and the Badgers were relegated to waiting for the



Wisconsin guard Brad Davison (34) shoots during the second half against Nebraska at the Kohl Center in Madison, Wis., Sunday, March 6, 2022.

result of the Iowa-Illinois game later Sunday to determine if they'd share the title as well as their seed for the Big Ten Tournament.

The Illini won and tied with UW for first place in the Big Ten regular-season standings. The Badgers lost their lone matchup with the Illini on Feb. 2, giving Illinois the edge in the head-to-head tiebreaker. Illinois will be the No. 1 seed and the Badgers' will be the No. 2 seed in the conference tournament, which opens Wednesday. UW will play the winner of No. 7 Michigan State and No. 10 Mary-

land at 5:30 p.m. Friday at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

The Cornhuskers won Sunday by capitalizing on uncharacteristic Badgers' mistakes, the absence of Johnny Davis and UW not hitting a field goal in the final 5:48 of the game. Nebraska walked away with their fourth Big Ten win this season.

It's not the way the Badgers wanted to finish their schedule, but it doesn't wipe out the fact that they only lost six games during the regular season. It doesn't cancel out the unexpected success this team has or the 15-5 finish in Big Ten games.

That's the mindset UW is adopting heading into postseason play. The Big Ten Tournament begins Wednesday, but the Badgers received a double-bye and won't play until Friday.

"Losing stinks," Davison said. "Losing is the worst. ... That being said, all of our goals are still in front of us. ... I mean it's one game and ... we keep saying like the best is yet to come and now everyone is 0-0. We accomplished our first goal, we got the Big Ten championship. We won it and now we go out there and we get to chase another title. That's

the message I'm relaying to these guys and that was the message in the locker room, 'Can't change it. You can learn from it and move on! Now March Madness starts!'"

UW coach Greg Gard said he was more frustrated about the team's loss than Big Ten tournament seeding being out of its hands. UW turned the ball over seven times in its first 18 possessions Sunday, which allowed Nebraska to build a 12-point lead.

The Badgers built their own 10-point lead after an 18-5 run in the second half, but were without Davis, who played only 12 minutes, for a majority of the game. The Badgers' leading scorer sat out the last 10:54 of the first half due to foul trouble and was injured less than three minutes into the second.

Nebraska's Trey McGowens was ejected from the game after the referees called him for a Flagrant-2 foul after reviewing the two-foul play against Davis. Davis had to be helped off the floor, went straight to the locker room and didn't return. Davis was seen walking in a boot on his right leg following the game.

Davison said Davis' absence wasn't an excuse for the loss, but missing the potential National Player of the Year didn't help the Badgers' cause.

"Not the finish you want to have in terms of your last home game," Gard said. "But as I told the team, I said, 'This is a one day, one moment in time. This is one day, one moment in time. This is one day, one moment in time. This is one day, one moment in time. Let's not lose sight of ... the day wasn't good, but the season has been fantastic!'"