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TOP STORY

Golden Eagles hold off Tigers charge

Kayla VanHoose | For The Daily Independent

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PAINTSVILLE Johnson Central beat district rival Paintsville, 64-55, on Tuesday night.

With a quick six points from John King and two Isaiah May 3s with an and-one, the Eagles jumped out to a 13-0 lead to start the game. The first quarter ended 17-5 in Central's favor.

The Tigers came out hot in the second with an 11-0 run to start and outscored the Eagles 24-12 in the second quarter. A tied-up halftime score of 29-29 left the game up for grabs.

To start the third, the Golden Eagles left the locker room on a mission, jumping out 10 points on Paintsville, bringing the Tiger deficit back to double digits. The Tigers didn't score until the 3:48 mark in the third.

Things got a bit chippy and a coach technical for the Tigers gave the Eagles another two points. Paintsville could only find the goal in the third by way of three Braxton Tharp free throws, ending the quarter 46-32 in Johnson Central's favor.

Entering the fourth, May sank a 3 while Ryleh McKenzie hit one trey and a transition bucket, bringing the Eagles their largest lead with 5:53 left to go, 54-34.

The Tigers didn't lay down, catching a 10-2 run with 4:04 left. Back-and-forth scoring in the final minutes gave hope that the Tigers still weren't out of the contest, cutting the lead to single digits with 59 seconds to go. Trading fouls back and forth just couldn't get the Tigers out of the woods, and despite a 28-point effort by Tharp, the Eagles finished victorious, 64-55.

Cory VanHoose led the Eagles with a quiet 22 points and eight rebounds, sinking 7 of 7 free throws and shooting 70% from the field. May hit four 3s and a couple of momentum-changing buckets, for a total of 18 points, and King chipped in 10 points. Great ball movement by point guard Grant Rice led the team with seven assists and nine points of his own.

"Johnson Central is a really well-coached team, with very strong guard play," Tigers coach Landon Slone said. "John King was a game-changer for their team early and his effort throughout the game never wore off. He plays the game the right way. VanHoose has been a tough matchup for us for four years. It's a must to stop him early in transition and when we failed to do that, he hurt us with his dribble penetration. We will make some adjustments going into our next meeting.

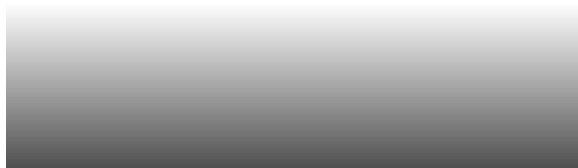
"I felt like the effort was there for our guys, but we had long droughts offensively in the first and third quarter that really hurt us. Braxton Tharp was great offensively and I was very pleased with our guys coming off the bench (Rex Castle and Mason Lovely). Overall, we didn't get the job done, but our team got better tonight. We have to continue to do so and be ready for another tough district test on the road Saturday night."

"One of the strengths of Paintsville's team is their ability to always have the 'never out of a game' mentality," Johnson Central coach Tommy McKenzie said. "We got out to a quick start, but to their credit, they battled us back all night. This was a good win for us because it's hard to get wins in the 57th District. It was very important to come out the way we did but we can't become complacent afterwards. Our guys showed a tremendous resolve to battle back after Paintsville took the lead in the first half following our quick start.

“The fact that we were able to begin the second half the same way we started the game and then finish the game off shows that our kids are growing and that we've got a chance to do some good things this year.”



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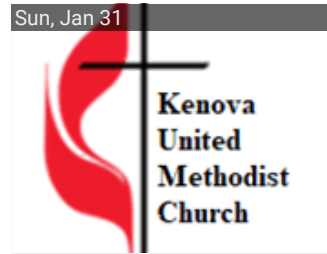





An advertisement for Dick's Sporting Goods. The top section features a snowy winter scene with the text "EVERY SEASON STARTS AT DICK'S SPORTING GOODS." and "TEMPS DROPPING LAYER UP". Below this, a man is shown wearing a dark green long-sleeved shirt and matching overalls. A left-pointing arrow is on the left side of the man's image. A black button with the text "SHOP NOW >" is located at the bottom right. At the bottom of the advertisement, the text "24°" is displayed in white on a black background.

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