

Borden edges Triton for school's first-ever state title

The Borden High School boys' basketball team put an exclamation point on their magical season by defeating Triton, 55-50, in last Saturday's IHSA Class A state championship game in Indianapolis.

The Braves had control for much of the game, but had to withstand a late rally by the Trojans in order to record the school's first-ever state title.

"These guys are very high character kids and they deserve this moment," said Borden Head Coach Doc Nash after the game. "They've worked their tails off since day one to be where they are, and I can't say enough good things about them. I am very proud of them."

The game was the school's first trip to the state finals, but it was clear early on that the big stage would not rattle them.

Borden's Cody Bachman converted an old-fashioned three-point play to start the fourth quarter, giving the Braves their largest lead of the game, 31-19.

That play seemed to be a wake up call for Triton and their star player Clay Yeo.

Yeo, who will play Division College basketball at Valparaiso next season, had just seven points entering the fourth quarter and hadn't been a factor, but that all changed when he put his team on his back and helped quickly close the gap.

Yeo scored 20 points in the fourth quarter alone, but none were bigger for his team than a three that cut the Borden lead to just two, 44-42.

Just like they had done all day, Borden regained composure.

Two free throws by Bachman put the Braves back up four.

Garrett Vick grabbed a defensive rebound on Triton's next possession and the Braves stretched their lead back to six, 48-42, with 2:09 remaining in the game, when Michael Lynch hit two more free throws.

Six seconds later the Trojans cut the deficit in half, when Yeo took the ball the length of the floor and converted an and-one, making the score, 48-45.

The two teams traded baskets on the next two possessions when Jalen McCoy hit a 17-foot jump shot and Yeo hit two free throws for Triton with 1:18 seconds remaining in the game.

Borden's Billy Kirchgessner was fouled on his team's next possession and hit two free throws.

Kirchgessner then came up with what would prove to be the play of the game when he stripped the ball from Yeo with 42 seconds remaining.

Kirchgessner passed the ball to Bachman, who was fouled on the play and he hit both of his free throws, extending the lead to seven points, 54-47, and allowing the Braves to exhale.

Kirchgessner put the icing on the cake when he gave his team the final point at the charity stripe.

Kirchgessner admitted that after he stole the ball he couldn't help but think the game was over.

"I really started to think at that point that we were going to be state champions, but then I looked over at (Nash) and he was settling everyone down," Kirchgessner said.

Nash said he warned his team time and time again that Yeo would help lead a charge.

"Yes, we knew it was coming," Nash said. "We kept telling the kids in the timeouts that they were going to get Yeo going. Give him credit, he made one shot on the right side falling away with two guys in his face. He has a good basketball IQ. He knew they needed a bucket, and took the ball drove the length of the floor in three seconds and got an and-one. The kid is good. He is the best player we've seen all year! We knew he was going to make a charge and we did our best to counter him."

In addition to Yeo's strong finish, Triton used a halfcourt trap to help force Borden to play faster than they might have liked.

Triton Head Coach Jason Groves said using that defense was not the plan going in.

"The halfcourt trap was plan B and I didn't want to have to go to plan B, but we had to," Groves said.

As for Borden's defense on Yeo, he said they had a good game plan.

"They knew where I was at all times," Yeo said of Borden holding him to two points in the first half. "I was surrounded every time I had the ball. I like to go to the basket early in the game and get in the flow and it just wasn't there. They played very good defense and credit their guys. We knew they were going to come out ready."

Borden built a sizable lead in the first half, 18-9, thanks to solid defense and a patient offense that saw four different players make their way into the scoring column in the first half.

Lynch, who won the mental attitude award, had six points in the opening period, Bachman had three and McCoy scored four as the Braves built a 13-7.

In the second quarter, Borden scored the first points off a Kirchgessner three with 7:22 remaining in the first half and each team managed just two points apiece the rest of the half.

Both coaches thought the first half helped to script the way the game would end.

"Our biggest strength through this entire tournament has been our defense and limiting teams to one shot and we weren't able to do that early," Groves said. "Borden got off to a fast start and we dug ourselves a hole."

Nash was slow to call his team's start perfect, but said it could have been the best half of basketball by a Borden team in the past seven seasons.

"I always try to pick out every thing we do wrong, but I know it's impossible to play a perfect game, but we strive for perfection," he said. "We could have played better, but was that one of the best halves of basketball we've ever played? It was probably pretty close."

As uneventful as the second quarter was, the third and fourth quarter more than made up for it, with both teams making runs and huge shots.

A basket in the paint by Triton's Seth Glinge pulled his team to within six points, but Borden got hot from beyond the arc.

Lynch hit an open three and Jalen McCoy, who finished with 15 points and 3 threes, hit another that kept the Braves up 9, 28-19 heading into the final period.

The early portions of the fourth quarter were like a prize fight with neither team backing down.

For every Triton run Borden had an answer.

McCoy hit back-to-back threes, Kirchgessner hit one and Josh Vollstedt who got an earful from Nash early in the game for passing up an open look earlier drilled one with 3:55 remaining that gave Borden an eight point advantage, 44-36.

Vollstedt's three forced Groves to take a time-out for Triton and that set up Yeo's furious

charge.

The win capped off a 24-3 season for the Braves. They had just one loss against a Class A team.

“It’s unbelievable,” Nash said. “To win with this group of kids is really special. I was probably harder on Billy Kirchgessner than I was on any kid I’ve ever coached. There were rough times; really rough times; really, really, rough times, but he is a winner. He proved that to me. He believed in me and bought into what we wanted to do. All of these guys did. I couldn’t ask for a more special group of individuals to play, coach and to be around.”