

Silver Creek wins fourth Sectional title in five years, 50-37 over North Harrison

By Alan Stewart  
Special Correspondent

Earlier this season No. 8-ranked Silver Creek held North Harrison to just 28 points in a 42-28 Mid-Southern Conference victory. The stakes were much higher on Saturday night in Ramsey with the two teams squaring off for Class 3A sectional 30 supremacy.

Though the Dragons got off to a somewhat sluggish start offensively, another stellar defensive effort was more than enough to overcome any shooting woes as Silver Creek picked up its fourth sectional championship in five years with a 50-37 win.

Silver Creek (19-5), which was coming off a sectional semi-final triumph over Scottsburg in which it held the Warriors to a single basket in the second quarter, reproduced the effort and held the host Cougars to just one field goal for almost an eight-minute stretch that spanned the second and third quarters.

Dragons coach Brandon Hoffman said his club's depth played a big role in holding North 22 points under its season offensive average and denying the Cougars their first sectional title in the 20-year-old class era.

"We just know we've got a lot of different guys we can put out there to contribute," Hoffman said. "Sammy (Barnett) was great tonight. Jacob Garrett was great tonight. Jack (Hawkins) hit big shots for us. Kooper (Jacobi) came off the bench and got the offense going. (North Harrison) had a tough one last night against Brownstown and we were able to just keep guys coming in, leaning on them with different players, and it ended up playing to our advantage."

The Cougars (17-9) used a flurry of drives to the basket and three-point shooting in the opening quarter to take a 17-9 lead at the first stop.

Skyler Wetzel, who paced his team with eight points, started the scoring with a steal and lay-in before matching threes from Hawkins and North's Max Flock. After the score was tied at seven apiece the Cougars went on a brief tear with buckets from Wetzel, Braden Jenkins and Jake Book.

Jacobi ended the run with a deuce, but Eli Gutknecht's triple try at the buzzer was aimed true and gave his team the 17-9 lead.

North wouldn't score again until 3:05 remained in the half on a basket by Flock, with Creek going on a 11-2 run in the period, including four points from the freshman Jacobi.

The run continued in the third with a triple by Hawkins and goals by Barnett and Zane Gross.

The slide, which ended up being an 18-2 explosion overall, was finally ended at the 3:18 mark on a bucket inside by North Harrison freshman Langdon Hatton. By the time the third quarter buzzer sounded the Dragons were in control by 10, 34-24.

Silver Creek swelled the advantage to 16 with 2:12 left in the game before the Cougars tried to make a game of it on a deuce by Jenkins and a triple by Gutknecht to trim the deficit to 11. Unfortunately for North Harrison, it was too little, too late for a comeback.

Barnett paced all scorers with 14 points, including a perfect 8-8 from the foul stripe, followed by 13 from Zane Gross and eight each from Hawkins and Kaufman.

After Wetzel's eight points, North got seven points from Flock, six points from Gutknecht and Jenkins, and five points from Book.

Silver Creek went 13 of 35 from the field and 18-23 at the line, dominated the glass, 27-18,

and committed 11 turnovers. North Harrison, which had 12 miscues, was 15 of 33 from the floor and shot itself in the foot at the foul stripe, going just 3-10. Both teams were 4-12 beyond the arc.

“It never gets old,” Hoffman said. “For me, I know it doesn’t and I sure hope it doesn’t for them.

“We had a 30-year stretch at Silver Creek where we won the sectional once,” Hoffman added. “A lot of great players at Silver Creek haven’t had this opportunity, so I just want the guys to get an appreciation for what it means to win in this tournament and what it means to the fans and all the former players they represent. I’m happy, I’m proud and I’m excited to see what we can do as we move on.”

Silver Creek advances to the Southridge Regional in Huntingburg, where it’ll tip off at noon against the host Raiders (12-13), which upset Vincennes Lincoln in double-overtime, 69-65. The other regional semi-final pits Greensburg (20-5) against No. 3-ranked Evansville Bosse (22-4).