

The losing streak had grown to 24 games when the Salem boys' basketball team headed to Mitchell Saturday night. Heading into the contest against Mitchell Salem's last win came on March 3, 2012. On Saturday, the Lions jumped out to an early lead and did what they needed to do in order to hang on in an 85-64 win over the host Jackets. "Any win is great," said Head Coach Hank Weedin. "With the situation we've been in we were due one and it felt good to end the losing streak, and hopefully, bring their conference."

Weedin said he and his coaches stressed all week that they needed to win the hustle points and they did that.

"The kids took that to heart after watching the game against Brownstown (a 90-36 loss), that we didn't do any of the hustle things," he said. "We saw how Brownstown did do it and it opened the kids eyes and we came out against Mitchell with a renewed focus."

Statistics from the win at Mitchell have Salem scoring 20 points off Bluejacket turnovers alone.

On offense, Weedin said both Jordan Baker and Caleb Couch both had the hot shooting hand.

"It was just overall a great team effort," Weedin said.

Weedin said the victory is a sign that his young team is gaining wisdom from the growing pains they've experienced over those 24 losses in a row.

He said one sign that they are growing up is the fact that they were able to withstand a Mitchell run.

"They got to within nine points," Weedin said. "We started to run the delay game. The kids did exactly what we asked them to do. We went out there took care of the basketball and when we got fouled, we stepped up to the line and hit the free throws."

"I am proud of them for the way they adjusted. I've had veteran teams in the past, who couldn't do that. We have a couple freshmen and a couple sophomores and a junior out there handling that pressure and I was really proud of them."

After the win, Weedin said he waited outside the locker room. He wanted to give the players a chance to celebrate and enjoy the feeling of their first win.

"I wanted to let them hoop and holler and feel good for a few minutes by themselves," he said. "Then I went in and we hooped and hollered for a few more minutes together. It was great to look around the room and see genuine grins on their faces."

Now, Weedin is hoping the win leads to confidence from his young squad.

They will host the Washington County Holiday Tournament this weekend.

Salem opens play at 7:45 p.m. Friday when they take on West Washington, a team they lost to 63-52 on Nov. 27.

“Now I think the kids realize that if we work hard and do the little things, good things will happen,” he said. “They know the things we have to work on and now they’ve tasted victory and I hope that makes them a little hungrier.”