



Warriors outlast Xenia 64-54

Wayne will face St. Xavier Saturday in District final

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With a short roster, and facing a tough Xenia team, the Wayne Warriors knew they would have their hands full on Sunday afternoon in their quest to claim a sectional championship. That proved to be true as the Warriors struggled to put away the stubborn Buccaneers but pulled away late for a 64-54 victory at University of Dayton Arena.

Wayne's win advances the Warrior's into Saturday's District championship game against the St. Xavier Bombers out of Cincinnati.

"We knew Xenia would give us a good game," said Wayne head coach Travis Trice. "They are a good team and they are full of seniors and they didn't want this to be their last game. That team plays like a team that's been playing together a long time. They are unselfish and Coach Anderson does a nice job with them."

Wayne played without Isiah Boddie and Xavier Jones, both significant contributors all season, for undisclosed reasons.

"We were doing what we were told to do and stuff, but we are looking to get them back," said Trice. "We are just excited about the other guys that stepped up tonight to help us win."

It was a very balanced Wayne attack, with four players in double figures. Keith Clements led the way with 17 points, followed by Travis Trice with 13, Markus Crider with 12, and Jason Bitsko with 11.

"I thought Clements played his heart out in giving us 17 points," said Trice. "He played a lot of minutes today and went 6-of-10 from the field and I was extremely proud of him. Crider has a banged up hip and didn't practice all week and came out and almost had a triple double (12 points, 12 rebounds, nine assists). I thought he did an incredible job with what he's been up against."

It was all Xenia early on as Buccaneer Andrew Bolka scored the first 10 points to stake Xenia to a 10-4 lead midway through the first period. Wayne scored six unanswered points, however, and tied the game at 10-10, and trailed just 13-12 at the end of the quarter.

The Warriors and the Bucs traded baskets to open the second quarter, and swapped the lead four times in the period before a late Xenia three-pointer tied the game at 24-24 with 1:48 left in the half. The Warriors claimed a slim 26-24 halftime advantage, however, thanks to a late bucket by Trice.

The Buccaneers asserted themselves to open the second half of play and with just over five minutes left in the period assumed another six point lead at 33-27, their largest of the game. It would be short-lived, however, as Wayne's Aaron Montgomery bookended a pair of baskets around a three-pointer by Crider to cap a 7-0 spurt that pushed the Warriors back into the lead at 34-33.

A pair of free throws would give the Bucs the lead one last time at 35-34, but the Warriors closed the quarter on a 6-2 run to take a 40-37 lead they would not relinquish.

The final quarter devolved into a free throw shooting contest with the two teams combining to shoot 29 foul shots. After four straight makes, the Bucs were within a point at 42-41 with 6:15 to play, but an 8-1 surge, mostly at the free throw line but aided by a three-point play by Bitsko, gave the Warriors a 50-42 lead.

"What else can I say about Jason Bitsko," said Trice. "This is a guy who doesn't score very many points but he's a workhorse and does what we need him to do. He takes care of business in the classroom, he's a 'yes sir' guy, and I'm glad he's on our team."

Forced to foul, Xenia sent the Warriors to the foul line where they converted just 15-of-24 for the game, but enough to allow them to ease out to the final score of 64-54.

With the win, Wayne (19-2) moves to Saturday's District championship game against the St. Xavier Bombers. The time for the game had not been set when this article was placed online, however it will be in Thursday's Huber Heights Courier.

"We have seen St. X twice," said Trice. "They are very well coached, typical St. X with a lot of size, some good shooters, they don't go very deep, but they play hard. They have a lot of strength and they take care of their business. They won't quit and won't quit battling."