

Sports

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Buzzer beater?



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Junior Fred Hults, #4, takes a three point shot at the buzzer in an attempt to tie the state playoff game against Santiam Christian Academy Friday, Mar. 4. in Coos Bay, Ore.

The Brotherhood meets match at State

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

The Illinois Valley High School boys' basketball team lost two intense, difficult games in OSAA State championships Thursday and Friday, March 3 and 4 to end the season placing eighth overall.

After suffering a lopsided defeat from Dayton, the Cougars fell to Santiam Christian 42-45 Friday morning, cutting short their state playoff run.

But for the Brotherhood, advancing to State was a dream they'd had since middle school. According to Illinois Valley boys' basketball coach Jeff Winters, the first goal has been met. Now, the team has nowhere to go but up.

"We got to the bottom of the mountain and made it part way up, but we didn't reach the top," Winters said.

On Thursday, the Cougars played Dayton from the 3-A West Valley league, a perennial State contender with the 6'10 Maika Ostling getting in the way at every turn.

Besides Ostling, the Dayton Pirates as a team might have played a perfect game Thursday, with deadly accurate shooting and a bench just about

as strong as their starters.

"They just didn't miss," Winters said. "We played as good a defense as we could have on them but they just kept shooting threes right in our face. The way [Dayton] looked at it, it didn't matter who they were playing, if they were playing like that they were going to win."

The result was a 48-80 rout of the Cougars, who until that point had never lost by more than six points. Dayton had a 50 percent three-point scoring average, 28 bench points and a tournament-high 47 rebounds.

It wasn't the best game for Illinois Valley, who struggled to get rebounds against Dayton's zone defense. Winters said the team wasn't used to the playing style of its opponents, who favored a tight passing game rather than back-and-forth shootouts.

"We thought we'd see man defense and we saw zones," Winters said. "A lot of low-scoring games, a lot of passing around...well our style is, let's get it moving here. We play better run and gun. These other guys, they're all about zone defenses and slowing everything down."

Winters said the Cougars also had to adjust to a different refereeing style; rather than calling as many fouls, the refs were more inclined to let the teams play.

"Everything's different," Winters said. "It's more physical, they could get away with stuff and [the referees] didn't blow the whistle that much. [Our team] had a tough time trying to adjust to that."

But Winters said even Dayton fans were complimenting Illinois Valley for its playing style, going up against the opponent head to head.

"Their fans were glad even though [Dayton] won by a lot, it was a more exciting game and a lot more fun to watch," Winters said.

After the disappointing loss to Dayton, Illinois Valley teammates regrouped Friday morning to face Santiam Christian.

This match-up was much closer, with both teams trading the lead throughout the game. The Cougars led the first quarter 13-12 and were down by two at the half. But at the start of the third period, Santiam Christian ran up eight straight points to go

ahead by ten while Illinois Valley shooting went cold. The game didn't end there, however: the Brotherhood answered with ten points in a row of their own.

"When they got down ten, they could've just quit, but they didn't," Winters said. "That's why they're the Brotherhood. It's what they've done all year when they've been in positions like this. They just fell a little bit short."

In the final quarter, Winters said Illinois Valley led 40-39. Then Santiam Christian made a shot to go ahead by one. In the end, the Cougars had a few chances to score but missed a basket that could have put the game into overtime.

"It was like playing Cascade Christian," Winters said. "Whoever had the ball at the end probably was going to win. That's how it seems to work out."

The Cougars held their awards banquet Tuesday evening, March 8, culminating one of the most exciting seasons in recent memory.

Five seniors will move on, but a solid roster of underclassmen and experienced vets plan to return for next season.



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Senior Roger Hults, #20 has another shot blocked, a sad reminder of both games.