

Mustangs exit district tournament early

By Ashley Conklin

Heppner's boys basketball team received an early exit at the District 7-A tournament last Friday afternoon at the hands of the Sherman County Huskies, particularly Bill Martin.

The 6' 3" junior scored a career-high 41 points and added 15 rebounds to lead the Huskies to a 75-51 win over the Mustangs. The loss ended Heppner's season at 10-10.

"I was a little surprised at how easy they (Sherman County) got the ball inside," Heppner coach Mike Royer said. "I thought our defense was ready to control Martin."

Martin scored 23 points in the first half to propel the Huskies to a 39-27 lead at halftime as the Mustangs were never able to get back into the game.

"I kept waiting for us to make a run at them but it never happened," Royer said. "We struggled offensively all night."

Dick Devin paced Heppner with 14 points and Russell Britt added 9 more off the bench, but Wayne Wilgers and Bryan Padberg, Heppner's top two scorers, were held in check.

Wilgers scored 8 points, but 14 below his 22 point per game average. Meanwhile, Padberg, who had been averaging 14 points a game, only scored 4.

The inside play of Martin and the outside sharp shooting of Gary Eaton and Tracy Fields paced the Huskies early on.

Martin popped in 11 points but it was the outside shooting of the two Sherman County guards that opened things up for Martin inside.

Fields scored six of his eight points in the first frame and Eaton had four of his eight points as the Huskies led by as many as 13 points in the first frame before settling for a 21-10 lead.

Martin continued to bang inside during the second period to score eight more points and help Sherman County extend its lead to 39-27 at the break.

Devin, who scored 10 of his points in the first two quarters, had 6 points in the second period as did Wilgers as the Mustangs tried to stay in the game.

Heppner, which has come back in the second half in many games this season, was unable to on Friday as the Huskies continued to roll on.

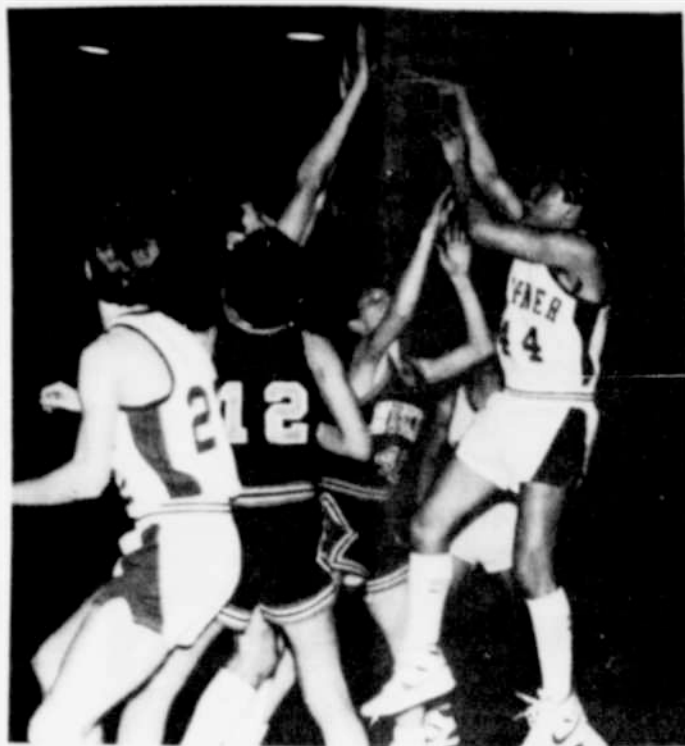


photo by Joyce Hughes

Arkie Smith break dances.

Sherman County scored the first eight points of the third quarter and led 47-29 before Padberg hit a jumper with 4:57 to go in the quarter for the Mustangs first points of the quarter.

However the Huskies, behind nine more points from Martin, continued to dominate the game as Sherman County controlled the third quarter 19-8 to increase its lead to 58-35.

Martin added 9 points in the fourth period as the Huskies led by 31 points, 70-39, at one point before Heppner made it 75-51 at the final.

Eaton and Fields were nearly perfect in the Sherman County backcourt in feeding the ball into Martin and pressuring the Mustang guards.

Eaton had five assists and Fields stole the ball three times to lead the Huskies into forcing 27 Heppner turnovers.

Sherman County also made 58 percent of its field goals, 32 of 55, including Martin's 17 of 25 clip from the field.

Meanwhile, the Mustangs were 41 percent from the floor making 20 of 49 attempts. Heppner was also 11 of 15 from the charity stripe for 73 percent.

The Mustangs were able to grab only 28 rebounds and were led by Wilgers (seven boards) and Padberg (five boards).

Padberg also had five assists to lead Heppner in that category.

"We didn't play that well but you

have to give Sherman County a lot of credit because they played a good game," Royer said. "They deserve a lot of credit."

"It's disappointing to end the season this way," Royer added, "and it could be blamed on a lot of things, but what is done is done and I'm already looking forward to next year."

The Mustangs will have starters Devin and Padberg (both sophomores) back next year along with junior starter Duane Ball but will lose seniors Wilgers and Trent Harrison, both starters, and reserve Gene Garrett.

Wilgers led the team in scoring (20.7 points per game) and rebounding (9.7 per game).

Padberg was second in scoring and Harrison second in rebounding. Padberg was also first in assists (5.8) and Ball second.

Devin finished third in scoring (9.4 points), rebounding (4.9) and steals (2.8).

Along with the three returning starters next season, Heppner will also have the services of freshman Britt again.

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