

## **A Night For The “Twos”**

**By Sonny Fulks – for SWDAB.org**

Wednesday was a night of anticipation for the nearly 5,000 that showed up at UD Arena for the Boys Division II District Finals. It was a night for the “twos”, and for their respective parts, Dunbar, Roger Bacon, and Thurgood Marshall did not disappoint the partisans who showed up to see them extend their season into next week’s regional round of the tournament.

In the opening game of the evening, Dunbar (21-3) was solid beginning to end against an Indian Hills team ((19-4) that played its heart out, but could not match up against the taller and deeper Wolverines. Dunbar won going away, 77-54.

“I’m proud of what we did to get here,” said Indian Hills coach Tim Burch. “Unfortunately, we ran into one of the best teams in the state. The team that beats Dunbar will have to be very, very good on that particular night.”

Dunbar got off to a quick start, hitting 6 of its first 8 shots from the field, highlighted by an alley-oop dunk by Geron Johnson on the Wolves’ second possession of the game.

“That was a spark,” said the affable Johnson, who led all scorers with 18 points. “It seems like we really respond whenever we do something exciting like that.”

Coach Pete Pullen couldn’t disagree.

“The kids were very confident tonight. They’ve been a great group to coach because they feed off each other and they work as hard as any team I’ve coached.”

In the night’s second game, Graham (20-4), a sentimental favorite out of Champaign County and the Central Buckeye Conference, never got untracked offensively against the taller and athletic Roger Bacon Spartans (19-5). Leading 18-15 thirty seconds before the half, the Spartans’ Paul Byrd hit a three-pointer off a turnover that tied the game at 18 at the break. Graham was never the same in the second half. Bacon scored the first nine points after intermission and went on to a 47-34 win.

“Paul’s shot was huge,” smiled Bacon coach Brian Neal. “It gave us the momentum at halftime. After that...we just played like we do every day in practice. Frankly, we haven’t played that well so far in the tournament. Tonight in the second half people saw the team that I get to see every day.”

In the nightcap, Springfield Shawnee (16-7) hung tough for three quarters, but in the end Thurgood Marshall (19-4) and wing Melvin Banks were just too much, advancing with a 52-37 win.

Marshall’s pressure defense was the difference throughout the game, causing turnovers and easy transition opportunities for the omni-present Banks. He finished with a game-high 21 points, his best performance in the tournament to date.

District weekend continues with Division III play on Thursday at the Arena, Division IV champions will be determined on Friday, and action concludes on Saturday with the Division I pairings.

The Southwest District Athletic Board wishes to remind all Division I fans of an offer that was inaugurated last year at UD Arena. You can buy a special Southwest District Board ticket for \$16 from participating schools, or at the UD Arena ticket window, and attend all five (5) Division I district final games...plus receive a complimentary parking pass and a tournament program. It’s a savings of 33% over buying tickets on a per-game basis, and again, made available through the Southwest District Board.