

Indiana High School Athletic Association

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Blake Ress, Commissioner

Forest Park Rallies From 10-Point Deficit to Win First IHSAA Title

Coach Tom Beach's Forest Park Rangers (23-4) out-scored Harding 24-14 in the final quarter to rally for a 68-63 victory in the IHSAA Class 2A championship game before a class basketball afternoon-session record crowd of 15,748 at Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis. The previous attendance mark was 15,636 in 2000.

Forest Park junior forward Brandon Hopf scored 27 points and grabbed a class 2A-record 16 rebounds to pace the Rangers. That total of 27 points in second in Class 2A history, while the rebounding record surpasses the previous standard of 14 by J.D. Clampitt (2002) of Speedway and Trai Essex (2001) of Harding. Forest Park shattered the Class 2A team rebounding record with 52—the previous mark was 39 by Jimtown in 2004. Forest Park out-rebounded Harding 52-39, with the two teams' combined total of 91 a new Class 2A record. The previous standard was 68 by Jimtown and Brownstown Central last year. Forest Park an amazing 25 offensive rebounds in the contest. Forest Park attempted a class 2A-record 72 shots, with the old mark 56 by Brownstown Central in 2004.

Hopf broke the Class 2A record with 10 field goals, eclipsing the mark of nine by three different players. His cousin, Clint, joined him in double digits on the boards with 11 caroms.

Harding blocked a Class 2A-record nine shots, with four different players rejecting two apiece. The two teams combined for 11 blocks, breaking the old record of eight on two occasions. Harding had a Class 2A-record 14 steals, surpassing the mark of 12 by Westview in 1999. The two teams combined for a record 23 steals, passing the total of 20 by Westview and Paoli in 1999.

Forest Park raced to a 6-0 lead, but Harding countered with a 14-2 run on its way to a 16-12 edge after one quarter. Harding matched its six-point advantage in the second quarter before settling for a 35-32 halftime lead. Harding senior guard Rodney Bell scored 17 of his 19 points in the first half on 6-8 shooting from the field (3-3 treys).

The Hawks extended their lead to 10 twice in the third quarter, the last time at 47-37 with 1:59 left in the third quarter. Forest Park rallied with a 13-3 surge to tie the contest at 50 on a lay-up by Brandon Hopf with 4:46 to go. Harding led 52-50 at the 4:23 mark after a lay-up by senior forward Selwyn Lymon. Lymon finished with team highs of 20 points and 12 rebounds and a game-high five steals.

But, Forest Park countered with a 9-0 spurt to make it 59-52 with 2:43 left. Brandon Hopf scored six of those nine points. Harding closed to within three at 62-59 on a trey by sophomore guard Deaundre Muhammad with 33 seconds remaining, but they could get no closer.

Harding junior guard DeQuione Sanders dished out a game-high seven assists, adding 11 points for coach Al Gooden's 16-10 squad, which made its third trip to the championship game in five years. Forest Park was playing for the title for the second time in three years, finishing second in 2003.

IHSAA Book, *Play On*, Recaps 100 Years Of High School Sports in Indiana

The exciting book, *Play On*, celebrating 100 years of high school sports in Indiana, is perfect for that sports fan or the history buff you know. Filled with 150 pages of engaging photographs, captivating stories and a walk down memory lane, it's on sale through the Indiana High School Athletic Association. It's not available in book stores, so contact the IHSAA at 317-846-6601 (Mon.-Fri., 8-4 EST) or click on the link above to learn more about this special tribute to 100 years of Indiana high school athletics.

Team Posters And Individual Action Photographs Available

Visit 20-20 Photographic, the IHSAA's photographer and the Midwest's Leader in Sports Action Photography, for images captured during Saturday's state championship games! Action photos and team photos as well as 20-20's Ultimate Sports Poster will be available for purchase later in the week following the state finals.

Own This Game On VHS Or DVD

If you'd like a copy of this state championship game, the IHSAA will have it as well as each of the other three contests (one game per video) available in VHS or DVD formats as part of the IHSAA Video Library collection. Phone in your order beginning Monday, March 28 to 317-846-6601 (M-F, 8-4 EST) and pay by credit card (Visa or MasterCard accepted). VHS copies are \$35 each by mail, while DVD copies are \$55 each by mail. Please allow up to four weeks delivery.

IHSAA State Championship Merchandise

For t-shirts and other merchandise commemorating this year's state finals tournament or for any of our events, visit our friends at Morris, Inc.

State Finals Programs Available

Couldn't be there for the state finals? You can still purchase a copy of the official program while supplies last! Programs are \$3.00 if you purchase in person at the IHSAA Office (9150 N. Meridian Street in Indianapolis) or \$5.00 by mail (postage included). To order, call 317-846-6601 (M-F, 8-4 EST) to pay by credit card (Visa or MasterCard accepted) or send a check for \$5.00 made payable to the IHSAA, a note including your return address and brief description of your request and mail to: IHSAA Programs, PO Box 40650, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0650.

Class 2A Championship Game Quotes

Harding Coach Al Gooden

"I thought the kids did a pretty good job, I thought they fought hard until we got to the third quarter when we lost our composure a little bit when they got a seven point lead against us. In the fourth quarter we bounced back and did some good things."

"We had some good shots and good looks at the basket, we just didn't put them down. Once we got it back under control we were hitting some shots. I think we lost our composure a little bit down the stretch."

"To come down here and play for a state championship and lose such a tight one—I think it wears and tears on the kids."

(On comparing Forest Park to the competition they have played this year)

"I told you guys all along they were a good team. They match up well with us, and they did some good things. I think my kids did a great job guarding their guards. Their guards didn't hurt us. It was the two big kids getting a couple of offensive rebounds."

(On Selwyn Lymon)

“He’s a great basketball player, and as good as a player he is, he’s double as good a football player. You’re going to see some great things out of him next year. I wish I had him back for another year, I can use him.”

“They were kind of pressuring our wing guys and they left the penetration move open. We were doing a good job of getting it down into the paint and scoring and dishing it off. We’ll take anything we can get.”

“We settled down a little bit in the fourth quarter but it was just too much to overcome. We missed some free throws down the stretch and missed a couple lay-ups and open jump shots that we usually knock down. I thought the kids did a heck of a job—I’m proud of my kids.”

Forest Park Coach Tom Beach

“Harding has a great team. Coach Gooden does an outstanding job. He has a lot of experience of being down here. But, they are a young team—a lot like us with size, quickness and shooters, but we thought we were better. We just had to prove it.”

“I thought the first half was really good. Rodney (Bell) stepped up for them and had a big first half. We were going to give up the three-point shot to him and he proved to us that was a mistake. We had to make some adjustments and we did.”

“In the third quarter, I thought my team could have folded. We could have lost our composure. We were missing shots that we usually make and they were scoring. To be down 10 points to that good of a team (Harding), it would have been very easy for our guys to quit. But we kept our poise and composure and concentrated on our defense. All we talked about at the end of the third quarter was defense. Defense is going to take you there, defense got you here, and defense has to finish it.”

(On Brandon Hopf)

“I thought he (Brandon) played great at both ends of the court. He showed a lot of leadership and was outstanding on their guards.”

(On all the missed lay-ups)

“I think we probably set a state record for missed lay-ups. I don’t have an answer for that. At one point, I turned to our JV coach and said, ‘I think we have missed the most bunnies in the state during this game.’”

“I haven’t said anything yet about our bench—but they were huge. And they have been that way all through the tournament. We dress ten guys and play nine and I expect them all to contribute. Sometimes I don’t know who is going to stink it up before the game starts, but I’ll have it figured out by the fourth. I’m going to have my five best on the floor at the end.”

#40 Brandon Hopf

“It’s hard to put into words what I’m feeling. Last week, after semi-state, we had a big pep rally and I said I wouldn’t be satisfied with another red ring—I wanted a blue one. Endurance was a key to the game. I thought early Harding played their game but I kept tuned in the entire game and you saw the outcome.”

(On missing lay-ups)

“I don’t think it was their size that bothered us. We just hurried our shots a bit, but then again, maybe it was a little bit mental.”

#20 Matt Atkins

(On guarding Harding's Rodney Bell)

"I looked at the tapes and noticed he was only shooting about 20% from long range. So early, I just tried to keep in front of him and you saw what happened in the first half. In the second half, I tried to be more aggressive playing tighter on him, and still not letting him break me down off the dribble."