

Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc.

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Blake Ress, Commissioner

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TIGERS ROAR TO TITLE IN DOUBLE OVERTIME THRILLER

In only the third double-overtime championship game in state finals history, the Northwestern Tigers defeated the Winchester Golden Eagles, 78-74, to capture the 2A boys basketball title. The Tigers overcame a 13-point deficit, four starters fouling out and a buzzer beater at the end of regulation to capture the first state championship in any sport for the school.

Junior Xavier Sanders led the Tigers with 29 points and 10 rebounds. Senior Mark Alexander added 17 points and fellow senior Cameron Richardson had 10. Northwestern finished the season at 25-2, winners of their final 15 contests.

Winchester, coached by Chip Mehaffey, was led in scoring by junior Brock Morrison with 27 and sophomore Tyler Koch with 24. The bench for the Falcons contributed 35 points. Koch and Morrison also led the Falcons in rebounding with 11 and 10, respectively. They finished the season with a 22-5 record.

The Golden Eagles were making only their second appearance in the state finals. They finished runner-up to Westview in the 2000 Class 2A championship contest.

Northwestern struggled to keep up with Winchester which pushed the ball up and down the floor and led by as many as 13 in the opening quarter, seeming to send in substitutions at every dead-ball.

According to Northwestern's third year coach Jim Gish, "we loosened up and began to play ball in the second quarter," creating six Winchester turnovers and going on a 15-1 run to pull even at 26-26. Junior Xavier Sanders had 10 points and four rebounds in the quarter for the Tigers en route to a 31-30 halftime lead.

Winchester worked its way back into the lead, 45-41, by hitting three three-pointers on successive possessions in the third quarter to set up an exciting finish.

Winchester led most of the fourth quarter until junior Josh Maggard sank a jumper to give Northwestern the lead 55-54 with 26 seconds to play. The Tigers then created a turnover that gave them the ball and the lead with only 5 seconds remaining. Winchester was forced to foul to extend the game and it sent Sanders to the line who sank both shots. After a Winchester timeout, Koch hit a three-pointer from the top of the key at the buzzer to send the game into overtime. It was the only field goal the Golden Falcons made in the final quarter.

There were three ties and three lead changes in the first overtime while Northwestern led throughout the second overtime.

Sanders and Richardson each scored five points in the second overtime.

THAD LAUDENBACHER NAMED TRESTER AWARD RECIPIENT

Following the game, members of the IHSAA Executive Committee named Thad Laudenbacher of Winchester Community High School as the winner of the Arthur L. Trestler Mental Attitude Award.

The award is presented annually to a senior participant in each classification who was nominated by his principal and coach and has demonstrated excellence in mental attitude, scholarship, leadership and athletic ability.

Laudenbacher is a two-year middle school mentor for the D.A.R.E program and an elementary school mentor for the IHSAA's Ambassadors Cross-Age mentoring program. Winchester athletic director Steve Howell calls him, "the perfect example of the R.I.C.H.E.R. (Respect, Integrity, Caring, Harmony, Excellence and Responsibility) qualities. His testimony is genuine, as he lives his life the way he suggests the elementary students should lead theirs."

He is completing the Indiana Academic Honors Diploma this spring and plans to study Elementary Education at Anderson University.

Athletically, he was named to the All-County basketball team, the All-Regional team and was selected the winner of the Mental Attitude Award for the 2007 Randolph County Boys Basketball Tournament.

He is the son of Steve and Tonya Fouse and the late Craig Laudenbacher.

Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, the IHSAA's corporate partner, will present a \$1,000 scholarship to Winchester Community High School in the name of Laudenbacher.

The award is named in honor of Arthur L. Trestler, the IHSAA's first commissioner who served the Association from 1929-44.

VSN MEANS ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY

Visit our friends at Visual Sports Network, the IHSAA's official photographer for all state championship events and one of the leading action photographers in the Midwest. VSN, which was on site Saturday, has captured hundreds of images from this year's State Finals and will have them ready for viewing and purchase beginning Monday.

CHAMPIONSHIP MERCHANDISE STILL AVAILABLE

For t-shirts and other merchandise commemorating this year's 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 souvenir 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, have your Visa or MasterCard ready and call us at 317-846-6601 during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. EST).

POST-GAME QUOTES

Jim Gish, Northwestern Head Coach

"The one thing we discussed throughout this is the opportunity to play at this level comes once a year. A game like this, I give Winchester lots of credit."

"We were down and continued to fight back. The young men I work with are very intelligent, mature people. The kids in foul trouble took care of themselves."

"Our forte is to not to get off to a good start. We usually spot 8 to 10 points and then start playing. Today showed me the way we do things are alright."

"Zavier Sanders will find a way to get open. It's simply will and desire. He's been blessed with talent."

"They played the game hard and they played the right way. They attacked the basket, they have athletes and dribble penetration is difficult to defend. We changed defenses and I think that was the key that really made them start thinking. I think we had them confused."

Chip Mehaffey, Winchester Head Coach

"I'm proud of our team and effort. We learned a lot about perseverance and dealing with adversity."

"Northwestern probably played a little more intelligently than we did. We got caught up in the moment a lot and took shots that we don't normally take. We also turned the ball over a few too many times. We didn't execute against their pressure in the first half very well. But we did fine in the second."

"The lessons we learn from situations like we experienced today will help us deal with adversity throughout life. This team is like a "Band of Brothers". I've never had a team that is as close as this one. The guys will always have somebody to lean on whenever they need it, including their head coach."

"I thought we were in good shape up five late in regulation, but forced the action. We had our shot to win it but gave up the lead."

"We've not been a good ball handling team all year. The turnovers definitely hurt us tonight, but our defense has kept us in games all year and tonight. I've never known a team that has so many more turnovers than assists and is as successful as we were. I really don't know how we went 22-5."

(on Northwestern's Zavier Sanders)

"He's awesome, a super player. We have the utmost respect for him. We played behind him and didn't want to front him because he's as good as anyone in the state at getting to the basket to get rebounds."

"We are not guaranteed to be back next year. There are no guarantees in life. We didn't come here with the mentality that if we don't get it this year there is always next year."