

## Hornets edged by Laneville in state tourney, 55-54

Written by Administrator  
Saturday, 08 March 2014 12:35

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By BRANDON OGDEN

Special to the News-Telegram

AUSTIN – The Miller Grove Hornets didn't act like a team making their state tournament debut.

Instead, the Hornets gave frequent state tournament participant Laneville all it wanted.

After Tiarel Franklin connected on his first free throw with 9.7 seconds left to give the Yellowjackets the lead and missed the second, Miller Grove's Patrick Covington kicked the ball out to Aaron Smith for an open 3-pointer. However, Tralon Alexander came in to get enough of the ball to deter the shot and give Laneville a 55-54 win over Miller Grove in the Class A, Division II semifinals Friday night at the Frank Erwin Center.

"If they missed it, we wanted to go and not let them have a chance to set up," Miller Grove head coach Gary Billingsley said. "I tried to call a timeout with 4.3 seconds left, but he failed to see me. I think that's something that happened earlier also, so I guess I'm not the first guy that it happened to. I can't get fined, so I guess I can say that.

"I wish (Covington) would've shot the ball, but we've taught that if you get doubled to pass it, and he got it to Aaron where he could shoot it, and he did."

It was a battle of two tremendous individual performances.

Miller Grove's Covington had just seven points at halftime, but scored 18 in the second half to finish with 25 points and 12 rebounds. His 11 of 14 performance was a big reason Miller Grove shot 55.3 percent (21 of 38) from the floor.

"It's not hard when you have this guy shooting inside," Billingsley said as he pointed to Covington. "We've shot well from two all year."

"Honestly, I didn't see anything different, I just went out there and was more aggressive, knowing I had to do something," Covington said.

Unfortunately for Miller Grove, Laneville had its own star – senior Donta Harris.

Harris started 0 of 8 from the field, but he finished with 30 points, going 8 of 14 from deep, including hitting three three-pointers in the fourth quarter.

"We didn't cover No. 3 (Harris)," Billingsley said. "That was the one kid we weren't supposed to ever leave. There were back-to-back possessions where they did a screen and roll, and we were supposed to blitz or trap, but we didn't. We stood there and watched him shoot."

With Miller Grove leading 42-36 entering the fourth quarter, Harris hit three times from deep in the first 1:32 to cut the score to 46-45. Covington had Miller Grove's two baskets early in the quarter, trying to offset Harris.

The score was tied at 48 after a jumper by Covington, but the Yellowjackets responded with a 6-0 run to make it 54-48 with 3:27 remaining. The Hornets bounced back with their own 6-0 run, tying the game at 54 on a layup by Covington with 47 seconds remaining.

Laneville (33-6) set up for the final shot and eventually drew a foul with 9.7 seconds remaining, setting up the final sequence.

Laneville led 14-10 after the first quarter. Miller Grove used 17 points in the second quarter to take a 27-24 lead at halftime and outscored Laneville 15-12 in the third quarter.

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Logan Miller had 12 points for the Hornets, and Smith added 11 points, connecting on all three triples for Miller Grove.

The Hornets held a 38-23 advantage on the boards and 34-12 on points in the paint, but the Yellowjackets countered by forcing 26 turnovers and launching 58 shots, including 11 makes from downtown.

Miller Grove finishes the season with a 27-10 mark, overcoming double-digit deficits in both regional tournament games to advance to Austin.

“People have been doubting us all year, but the one thing the guys didn’t do was quit,” Billingsley said.

Laneville, which was making its 10th appearance in the state tournament, advanced to play Water Valley in the Class A, Division II final on Saturday.

Laneville 55, Miller Grove 54

MILLER GROVE (27-10)

Covington, Patrick 11-14 3-7 25; Miller, Logan 4-10 4-7 12; Smith, Aaron 3-9 2-2 11; George, Nathan 3-3 0-0 6; Sink, Tatom 0-0 0-0 0; House, Weston 0-1 0-0 0; Marler, Tyler 0-1 0-0 0; Green, Brennan 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 21-38 9-16-54.

LANEVILLE (33-6)

Harris, Dontavious 10-23 2-4 30; Anderson, Kendrick 5-13 1-2 11; Alexander, Tralon 3-9 1-2 9; Franklin, Tiarel 1-5 2-4 5; Roberts, Anthony 0-2 0-0 0; Lewis, LaDarius 0-0 0-0 0; Johnson, Ty 0-6 0-0 0. Totals 19-58 6-12 55.

Miller Grove 10 17 15 12 - 54

Laneville 14 10 12 19 - 55

3-point goals--Cumby Miller Grove 3-10 (Smith, Aaron 3-9; Miller, Logan 0-1), Laneville 11-25 (Harris, Dontavious 8-14; Alexander, Tralon 2-6; Franklin, Tiarel 1-4; Anderson, Kendrick 0-1). Fouled out--Miller Grove-None, Laneville-None.

Rebounds--Miller Grove 38 (Covington, Patrick 12), Laneville 23 (Harris, Dontavious 9).

Assists--Miller Grove 10 (George, Nathan 4), Laneville 8 (Johnson, Ty 4).

Total fouls--Miller Grove 12, Laneville 15.

Technical fouls--Cumby Miller Grove-None, Laneville-None.