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## Cumberland upends Casey in Little Illini boys' tournament

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CASEY -- Cumberland avenged an earlier loss beating Casey-Westfield 73-61 in Saturday's opening round of the Little Illini Conference boys' basketball tournament.

That was one of two wins by lower seeds as No. 6 Flora knocked off No. 3 Red Hill 56-53.

Top-seeded Marshall defeated Edwards County 81-42 and No. 2 Lawrenceville handled Oblong 70-50 to advance to the semifinal rounds slated for Tuesday.

Oblong is to play host to Hutsonville-Palestine at 6:30 p.m. today in the only game on the schedule.

On Tuesday, Marshall is to face Cumberland at 6 p.m. and Flora and Lawrenceville are to square off at 7:30 p.m. On Wednesday, Edwards County is to take on the winner of Monday night's contest at 6 p.m. and the Casey Warriors are face Red Hill at 7:30.

Cumberland 73, Casey 61

The Cumberland Pirates scored early and often en route to a 73-61 win over the Warriors of Casey-Westfield in a game where they never trailed.

"They were ready to play and show that the last game that wasn't necessarily the way they are," Cumberland coach Justin Roedl said of his Pirates, who lost to Casey 67-37 in December. "They kind of had a chip on their shoulder. Even after the game they said they wanted to play them again."

The Pirates made the most of their chance and this time Casey had no answer.

"We expended a lot of energy (against Teutopolis and Newton) and we just fell behind early," said Casey coach Chris Seaton following the loss. "Cumberland came out with the energy early on and they had revenge on their mind (from an earlier loss).

"We got down early, but were able to cut the lead to six a couple of times. We couldn't get the loose ball or the defensive stop when we needed it and couldn't get over the hump. Foul trouble also hurt us. Seth (Brewer) played very spirited for us and gave us a spark and Kruz (Kusterman) continues to raise his level of play.

The Pirates opened up with a 6-0 lead on back-to-back threes by Dalton Sowers and Silas Gabel. Casey's Kirk Shawver converted an offensive board to get the Warriors on the board 6-2. Jaton McMechan responded for Cumberland with a pair of baskets that upped the lead to nine, 11-2.

Kusterman converted an offensive board only to see that effort bested by Sowers with a pair of baskets and Jeremy Jansen with a deuce to give Cumberland a 17-4 advantage.

The Warriors strung together a few points off a basket by Brewer and a charity toss by Chris Unzicker to cut the lead to 10 with under a minute to play in the opening quarter. Sowers and McMechan closed out the scoring with a pair of Pirate baskets to take a 21-7 lead.

As the second quarter got under way, Snyder caught fire for the Warrior, hitting for his team's first nine point in the first two minutes of action including a pair of treys and a conventional 3-point play to cut the lead to nine, 25-16. The two teams traded baskets over the middle portion of the quarter with Casey cutting the lead to seven, 33-26 on a basket by Clinton Scott and a pair of charity tosses by Kusterman. With under a minute left in the half, Reed Draper drained a three to give the Pirates a double digit, 36-26 halftime advantage.

Following the break, Cumberland rattled off a pair of threes to widen the lead to 41-26 before Casey hit for eight straight points to pull within seven, 41-34. Then for every basket the Warriors would make, the Pirates would match and best that effort on their end of the floor to take a 53-39 lead into the fourth.

In the final quarter the two squads continued to trade baskets in the early going. Casey took a run at the midway point when the Warriors hit for nine unanswered points to narrow the Pirate lead to eight, 61-53 with just under three minutes to play.

That's when Sowers took the team on his shoulders as the senior rattled off eight of his game high 22 points during the final 1:22 of the game to seal the Cumberland victory.

Sowers led all scorers with 22 points while four other Pirates finished in double digits including Jansen with 15, Mehan with 12 and Draper and Gabel with 10 each.

This still wasn't a perfect Cumberland performance.

"We were 13-for-31 from the free-throw line and we let them have too many offensive rebounds but hopefully they saw that just playing hard, good things will happen," Roedl said. "I think this was the first game everyone came out playing hard the whole game."

For Casey, Snyder and Scott tallied 13 points each while Brewer pulled down a game high 18 boards and finished with nine points. Kusterman added eight points and eight rebounds and Unzicker chipped in eight points as well.

Published on Sunday, January 25, 2009 11:05 PM CST

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