

# Tigers fend off Wolves

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By Ashlee Hatten

By Justin Hatten  
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Olney, Ill. -

Two former North Egypt Conference foes collided Tuesday night at Ron Herrin Gym.

When the final horn sounded, the Olney Tigers emerged victorious 50-43 over the Flora Wolves in a game that featured nine lead changes.

Blake Pampe and Brandon Berry combined to go 6-of-6 from the free-throw line in the final 50 seconds as the Tigers improved to 9-3 with their seventh win in a row.

Olney and Flora (12-5) were ranked 12th and 14th respectively in the latest [illinoishighschoolsports.com](http://illinoishighschoolsports.com) Class 2A poll released Monday.

“It was two good teams going at it tonight that are striving to be great,” Olney head coach Rob Flanagan said. “It was a possession game and I was really proud of both teams. Flora is a good team that’s only gonna get better. They did a good job of fighting back on the road.”

With Olney leading 40-36, the Wolves cut the deficit to one when Bryton Krutsinger canned a three-pointer from the wing at the 5:47 mark in the fourth quarter.

After Mitch Schonert converted a backdoor layup off an assist from Berry, Mychal Bush-King hit a pair of charity tosses, which closed the gap to 42-41 with 2:55 to play.

The Tigers ran more than a minute off the clock on their ensuing possession before Christian Kabbes scored down low to make it a three-point game.

Sixteen seconds later, Kabbes had a chance to extend Olney’s lead but he missed the front end of a one-and-one and a jump-ball call on the rebound gave Flora possession.

Nick Painter’s 12-foot jumper fell short but Bush-King grabbed the rebound and was fouled. The 5’8” senior sank two more free throws as the Wolves trailed 44-43 with 50 seconds remaining.

After Pampe and Berry both went 2-of-2 from the stripe, Flora sophomore standout Paul Knapp missed a step-back three and Bush-King failed to convert two putback attempts, leaving the score 48-43 in favor of the Tigers.

Berry put an exclamation point on the win with a pair of freebies in the waning seconds.

“Four different times in the fourth quarter we could’ve tied it or took the lead and we didn’t capitalize,” Flora head coach Phil Leib said. “I’m very proud of our effort and give the Olney kids a lot of credit. They just took it to us.”

Both teams enjoyed success over the Christmas break as the Tigers won the Duster Thomas Hoops Classic in Pinckneyville while the Wolves were crowned champions of the Vandalia Holiday Tournament.

Olney and Flora could meet again in late February in the Flora Regional.

“This beats traveling to Mount Zion or Marshall,” Leib said. “It’s nice to play a rivalry game 30 miles down the road. The old NEC is never gonna die.”

Berry and Schonert led all scorers with 17 points apiece and Kabbes tacked on 10. Berry was 11-of-12 from the charity stripe.

“Brandon was very active tonight,” Flanagan said. “I was real pleased with how we handled the inside game. Christian made some big shots in the paint and Mitch worked his butt off. He’s a bulldog.”

Knapp, the Most Valuable Player of the Vandalia Holiday Tournament, finished with 12 points in a losing effort (his second lowest output of the season). He was 0-of-8 from three-point land due in large part to Schonert’s defense.

“At times, Paul rushed his shot a little bit but Schonert is a very good defender,” Leib said. “It’s important for Paul to get off early.”

Knapp pumped in 28 points last week against Stewardson-Strasburg in the title game at Vandalia. He knocked down seven threes.

“Knapp is so explosive,” Flanagan said. “He made some tough baskets but Mitch really made him work. Knapp is a marquee player who draws a lot of attention.”

Olney came out on top despite going 0-of-9 from behind the arc. After shooting 88 percent from long range in their 56-42 championship win over DuQuoin at Pinckneyville, the Tigers relied on their inside game Tuesday.

“We went right at them,” Flanagan said. “We had some good three-point looks off the secondary break in the first half, they just didn’t fall. We never had control of the game like we did against DuQuoin.”

Olney and Flora torched the nets in the first quarter, going a combined 13-of-18 from the field. The Tigers built a 13-9 lead on buckets by Kabbes and Schonert before Painter’s triple pulled the Wolves within one.

“Nick (Painter) played very well early on,” Flanagan said of the 6’5” sophomore. “He’s a talented player.”

After Schonert’s layup padded the margin to 15-12, Knapp drained a fallaway jumper as Flora trailed 15-14 at the end of one.

The Wolves jumped in front 20-17 with 5:34 to go in the second quarter but Olney ended the half with a momentum-changing 8-0 run.

Berry netted six-straight points and Pampe took a steal coast-to-coast for two, giving the Tigers a 25-20 lead at the break.

Following a back-and-forth third quarter, Flora’s Austin Lewis buried a three-ball from

the top of the key 40 seconds into the fourth that tied the game at 36. Schonert answered with a scoop shot in the lane and Berry swished a pair of free throws to make it 40-36.

“Our kids kept fighting,” Flanagan said. “Flora runs their stuff extremely well and Phil does a great job over there.”

The Wolves committed six of their 11 turnovers in the second quarter while Olney turned the ball over eight times. The Tigers shot 55 percent from the floor (18-of-33) compared to 47 percent for Flora (16-of-34).

Olney scoring – Brandon Berry, 17; Mitch Schonert, 17; Christian Kabbes, 10; Blake Pampe, 4; Derek VanGundy, 2

Flora scoring – Paul Knapp, 12; Nick Painter, 10; Bryton Krutsinger, 8; Austin Lewis, 5; Mychal Bush-King, 4; Kole Greenwood, 2; Brent Taylor, 2

Free throws – Olney (Berry, 11-12; Pampe, 2-2; Schonert, 1-1; Kabbes, 0-1), Flora (Bush-King, 4-4; Knapp, 2-4; Painter, 1-3)

Three-pointers – Olney (none), Flora (Krutsinger, 2; Lewis, 1; Painter, 1)

Rebounds – Olney (Berry, 6; Pampe, 3; Michael Fehrenbacher, 2; Schonert, 2)

Steals – Olney (Pampe, 3; Berry, 2; Schonert, 1)

Blocks – Olney (Kabbes, 2; Fehrenbacher, 1)

(Junior varsity)

Olney's junior varsity squad won its fourth-straight game Tuesday night, defeating Flora 35-28.

Joel Eagleson drilled a trio of three-pointers and paced the Tigers (4-1) with 11 points.

Donald Totten chipped in eight points and Mason Phillips canned a pair of treys for six points.

Olney scoring – Joel Eagleson, 11; Donald Totten, 8; Mason Phillips, 6; Brook Pampe, 5; Cherokee Edgington, 3; Joe Hake, 2

Next game: The Tigers will host the Robinson Maroons Friday night (6:15 p.m. JV start time).

