

Wolves squeak by in LIC Tournament opener



By Keith Gibson
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Casey, Ill. -
The Flora Wolves opened up the 2009 Little Illini Conference (LIC) Tournament last Saturday and escaped with a three-point win over the Salukis of Red Hill.

Freshman Paul Knapp dropped in a game high 25 points and Senior Jeremy Wallace added 16 points in the Wolves 56-53 victory.

Flora loss to the Salukis 57-41 on December 5, but Saturday knocked number three seed Red Hill into the consolation bracket of the LIC Tournament.

The LIC All-Conference band played the

By Keith Gibson-Sports Editor

Flora Wolves Freshman guard Paul Knapp scored a game high 25 points last Saturday as the Wolves defeated the number three seeded Red Hill Salukis 56-53.

National Anthem and started the afternoon at Casey High School.

Knapp controlled the opening tip for the Wolves, and Wallace worked the basketball around for the offense.

Wallace found Knapp for a three-point attempt. Knapp's three-pointer was off, but he was fouled sending him to the free throw line for three shots.

Knapp sank two of the three free throws to give the Wolves the early lead.

Red Hill answered with a three-pointer and took their first lead of the game.

The Wolves regained the lead quickly with back-to-back buckets from Wallace.

Wallace drained a three-pointer from the left wing, then a knocked down a jumper in the lane to put Flora up 7-3.

A foul on Senior Dakota Orel sent Red Hill to the free throw line, where they sank two free throws to cut the Wolves lead to two.

Flora slowed the pace of the game down and worked for a good shot. Knapp found an opening in the Salukis defense and drove to the hoop for a reverse lay up to put Flora up 9-5 with 5:45 to go in the first quarter. Red Hill worked the basketball back inside and answered the Wolves bucket. Senior Jeremy Edwards played a great game for the Wolves and came down with an offensive rebound and put it back to extend the Wolves lead back to four. The Salukis had a chance at an old-fashioned three-point play, but were unable to convert the free throw. Bryton Krutsinger and Knapp hit three-pointers and extend the Wolves lead to 17-9 with 3:24 left in the first quarter. The Wolves and Salukis both committed turnovers and after a miss by the Salukis in the paint, Krutsinger was called for an offensive foul when he drove to the bucket. Red Hill cut the Flora lead down to four, 17-13, when Wallace hit his second three-pointer of the quarter to push the Wolves lead to seven. The Salukis added two more buckets in the final minute of the quarter, but the Wolves led 20-17. Red Hill had possession of the basketball to start the second quarter and hit a three-pointer to tie the game at 20. Edwards responded with a three-pointer of his own to give Flora the lead back 23-20. Both teams shot very well in the first part of the game. A defensive stop by the Wolves allowed Flora to try to extend their lead. Knapp was fouled for the second time in the game shooting a three-pointer and went to the charity stripe for three shots. The Freshman drained all three free throws and Flora extended their lead to six. An over the back foul on Red Hill gave Flora the basketball back, but they were unable to take advantage. Red Hill continued to work the basketball inside and pick up fouls. The Salukis sank a pair of free throws, cutting the Wolves lead to four, 26-22. The game went back and forth for the remainder of the first half with Wallace drained his third three-pointer of the game and Knapp hit his second three-pointer. Edwards and Knapp each dropped in a deuce. Red Hill took their first lead of the game 27-26 at the 3:41 mark, but the Wolves fought through to take the lead back and eventually grow their lead back to five by halftime, 36-31. The Wolves first half saw them have good ball movement with great intensity and turned the basketball only five times in the first half. Flora's scoring in the third quarter came from beyond the three-point line as Knapp drained a pair and Wallace hit his fourth of the game. Edwards added a deuce as the Wolves came answered point for point with the Salukis and led Red Hill 47-42 after three quarters of play. The fourth quarter was one of the Wolves best quarters of the year as they found a way to hold on for a victory. Flora was outscored at one time in the fourth quarter 10-4, but bounced back to seal the victory from the free throw line. Edwards inbounded the basketball to Austin Lewis with six seconds to go in the game. Lewis sank the first of two free throws to put Flora up 54-52.

On Lewis' missed free throw, Krutsinger grabbed the rebound for the Wolves and was fouled.

Krutsinger drained both free throws on a one and one and put the Wolves up four with less than two seconds to play.

A late foul by the Wolves allowed Red Hill to make one of two free throws and the Wolves escaped with a three point victory.

Wolves Head Coach Phil Leib was very pleased with the win.

"He (Jeremy Edwards) played a gutsy performance. He has always been around doing the little things and doing everything you ask him to do. His shot has been struggling, but he hit some big shots for us," Leib stated after the winning.

The number six seeded Wolves win over the number three seed Red Hill advances them into the semi-final round to face Lawrenceville.

Flora's game was originally scheduled for Tuesday night, but the winter storm has moved the game to tonight (Thursday) at 7:30 p.m.

Other first round games in the Boys LIC Tournament saw the number five seed Cumberland upset Casey 73-61, number one seed Marshall pounded number eight seed Edwards County 81-42, and number two Lawrenceville defeated number seven seed Oblong 72-50.

Run Down

2's-3's-Free Throw Attempts-Free Throws Made-Total Points

Flora-Taylor-0-0-0-0-0; Durre 0-0-0-0-0; Earleywine-0-0-0-0-0; Wallace-2-4-0-0-16;
Orel-0-0-1-0-0; Edwards-3-1-0-0-9; Greenwood-0-0-0-0-0; Knapp-3-4-8-7-25;
Thompson-0-0-0-0-0; Lewis-0-0-0-0-0; Krutsinger-0-1-2-2-5; Flora Totals-8-10-13-10-56.

Red Hill-Hawkins-1-1-1-0-5; Latch-1-1-0-0-5; Blair-0-0-0-0-0; Brian-1-0-4-3-5;
Albertson-2-2-4-3-13; Brewer-0-0-0-0-0; Hahn-0-0-0-0-0; Akers-0-0-0-0-0; Jones-0-0-0-0-0;
Wirth-5-0-3-2-12; White-2-0-4-3-7; Young-1-0-7-4-6; Red Hill Totals-13-4-23-15-53.

Scoring by Quarter

Flora	20	16	11	9	56
Red Hill	17	14	11	11	53