

Fort Defiance Stomps Liberty Christian Academy in Regional First Round, 66 - 49

The Fort Defiance Indians saved their best for the last game of the season played in the Don Landes gym, outplaying a much taller and older team from Liberty Christian Academy in the first round of Region 3C play on February 17. It was the first win for FDHS in post-season play in many years.

Liberty Christian, out of Lynchburg, had eleven seniors on their team. They were an exceptionally big team with heights of 6' 8", two at 6' 3", seven players at 6' 2", and two at 6' 0". Fort wasn't intimidated, however, and shot and rebounded their best of the season in running their overall record to 14 - 9.

Before the game, it was announced that Tyreek Veney had been selected on the All-Shenandoah District first team and Henry Gutshall and Sam Garber were picked for the All-Shenandoah District second team. As they have done all season, these three led the charge for the Indians: Tyreek scorched the nets for 33 points, Sam pitched in 16 and Henry added 11. Tyreek started slow with only two points in the first quarter but he followed that with 11 in the second quarter, 7 in the third, and 13 in the fourth.

Fort started the game ice cold. The Bulldogs hit two three pointers in the first four minutes while the Indians were missing their first six shots of the game. Facing the 6 - 0 deficit, Henry snared an offensive rebound and scored first for the home team. After a Fort turnover, LCA scored again making it 8 - 2. Henry then banged in a three pointer from the top of the key to get the Indians within three at 8 - 5 with 2:28 to go in the quarter. Liberty Christian answered with a three of their own to go up 11 - 5. Tyreek got his only bucket of the quarter off an offensive rebound with 1:35 to go then Gio Armendariz Cruz got his shot to drop on a drive reducing the lead to 11 - 9. LCA scored to go up four then Sam got fouled after grabbing an offensive rebound and hit both free throws to make it 13 - 11 in favor of the visitors. Things weren't looking so good for the Indians when LCA hit all three free throws when Henry fouled a three point shooter but Sam got Fort back in contention with a three at the buzzer to leave the score at 16 - 14, Liberty Christian, at the end of the first quarter.

The second quarter was magnificent for Fort, especially Tyreek. Carter Fink scored after grabbing an offensive rebound to knot the score at 16's. Tyreek drove for two, then stole the ball and went coast-to-coast to give Fort a 20 - 16 advantage with 5:18 to go. Liberty Christian closed to 20 - 18 before Sam scored in close with 4:09 left. A three from LCA got them within one at 22 - 21 but Sam responded with a deep corner three with 3:09 to go. On Liberty's next possession, as he has done in nearly every game for the past two years, Henry's defense was superb as he drew a charging foul. On Fort's possession, Tyreek got off a shot in a crowd but it dropped to give FD a 27 - 21 lead. Sam nailed another three pointer, making it 30 - 21. A LCA foul shot made the score 30 - 22 but Tyreek swished a three from the top of the key with under a minute to go in the half. Not done, he then stole the ball and drove the length of the court for another two giving Fort a 35 - 22 lead at the half.

The third quarter opened with Tyreek ripping a three pointer to give Fort a sixteen point lead but Liberty Christian wasn't ready to fold yet. They made a three pointer to get Fort's lead back to 13. After Henry hit two of two from the free throw line, again LCA got a three to drop. Gio was fouled on a drive and he made one of two free throws to make the score 41 - 28. LCA scored then Henry took a pass down low and spun to his left for a deuce, lifting Fort's lead to 43 - 30. Tyreek got two in the paint but LCA followed with a three. Tyreek again scored on a drive giving FDHS a 47 - 33 lead but Liberty Christian scored the last five points of the quarter to close to 47 - 38.

Sam killed any thoughts the LCA fans may have had about a comeback as he bombed in a three pointer to open the fourth quarter. Liberty closed to 50 - 40 but Henry was left wide open under the basket for an easy two with 6:45 to go. Liberty and Tyreek then traded three point shots, making the score 55 - 43. Once again, Henry's defensive footwork came through as he drew another charging foul with 5:30 to go. It remained 55 - 43 for over two minutes as Fort started holding the ball. Kaden was fouled with 2:52 to go and he made the first shot of his one-and-one. Liberty Christian was forced to foul and Tyreek then single handedly took control of the game, hitting six of seven free throws and two layups in the final two minutes. LCA managed to get two three pointers to drop but it was too little, too late. The final score was Fort Defiance 66, Liberty Christian 49.

For Liberty Christian Academy, Lane Duff scored 13, Carson Hartless had 11, and Hanson Harris scored 10. Their season ended with an 11 - 10 record.

Fort's next game will be against the top seeded team in Region 3C, Spotswood, on Tuesday night in the SHS gym. It will be a tall task for the Indians but if they play as they did most of the game against Liberty Christian they have a chance for the upset.

Fort's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Gio Armendariz Cruz	1	0	1-2	3
Kaden Johnson	0	0	1-2	1
Bradley Hebb	0	0	0-0	0
Conner Patterson	0	0	0-0	0
Sam Garber	1	4	2-2	16
Tyreek Veney	9	3	6-7	33
Jack Liskey	0	0	0-0	0
Del Ray Jones	0	0	0-0	0
Jalen Alexander	0	0	0-0	0
Henry Gutshall	3	1	2-3	11
Alphonso Bruce	0	0	0-0	0
Austin Metz	0	0	0-0	0
Carter Fink	1	0	0-0	2
TOTAL	15	8	12 - 16	66

Liberty Christian Academy's Box Score:

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
Lane Duff	2	3	0-0	13
Cole Chapman	0	0	0-0	0
Landon Etzel	1	0	4-4	6
Asher Hildebrand	0	0	0-0	0
Matthew Durst	0	0	0-0	0
Parker Damon	1	2	0-0	8
Landon Wood	0	0	0-0	0
Carson Hartless	1	3	0-0	11
Austin Jenkins	0	0	1-2	1
Riley Staples	0	0	0-0	0
Hanson Harris	2	2	0-0	10
Noah Stephens	0	0	0-0	0
Cade Elder	0	0	0-0	0
Jaden Skates	0	0	0-0	0
TOTAL	7	10	5-6	49

The following article was in the Waynesboro News Virginian:

BOYS BASKETBALL | FORT DEFIANCE 66, LIBERTY CHRISTIAN 49

Fort Defiance boys basketball team surges past Liberty Christian Academy

Ben Craft

Feb 17, 2023



Fort Defiance's Sam Garber drives past a defender during a Region 3C playoff game against Liberty Christian Academy on Friday night in Fort Defiance.

Ben Craft, The News Virginian

Ben Craft

ORT DEFIANCE — Head coach Brandon Fulk said the Indians looked more locked in than they had all year in practice this week.

F It showed on the court Friday night as Fort Defiance picked up the 66-49 win over Liberty Christian Academy in the opening round of the Region 3C boys tournament. The Indians impressed shooting the ball all night, including a dominant 34-point performance from senior Tyreek Veney.

“I thought we’ve gotten good shots all season, but outside of maybe two halves, we just haven’t made shots,” Fort Defiance head coach Brandon Fulk said. “We made shots tonight. I thought we could get whatever we wanted, and they went in.”

The scoring started slowly for the Indians, as Henry Gutshall recorded the team’s first basket over four minutes into the opening quarter. The Bulldogs ended the opening period with a two-point advantage, but a buzzer-beating triple by Samuel Garber set the tone for the rest of the game for Fort Defiance.

Veney and Garber came alive in the second quarter, leading an offensive onslaught as the Indians pulled away. Both players scored 13 first-half points as they took a 12-point lead into the intermission.

“It takes a lot of pressure off to have someone out there who can score with me,” Veney said of his scoring partner on Friday night.

The Indians thrived, moving the ball and finding the open man, mostly avoiding turnovers.

“I thought most of the year we shared the ball well, but it looks even better when things are going in,” Fulk said. “When we’re sharing the ball, and multiple guys are making shots, that gives the team confidence to keep moving the ball and getting the best shot for the group.”

The Bulldogs cut their deficit to nine entering the fourth quarter, but Garber opened the final period with his fourth triple of the night. After that, the Indians locked up defensively, and Veney sealed the game with a bucket through contact to a loud ovation with just over a minute remaining.

Veney’s 34 points led all scorers, while Garber supplied 16 and Gutshall scored 11.

“It didn’t start well. I forced a couple of threes,” Veney said of his performance. “Once I decided to get to the cup, it started dropping in, and it opened up for me. When I did shoot my shots, I had to shoot it with confidence.”

The Indians advance to play top-seeded Spotswood (21-2) on Tuesday night.

FORT DEFIANCE 66, LIBERTY CHRISTIAN 49

FORT DEFIANCE 14 21 12 19 — 66

LIBERTY 16 6 16 11 — 49

FORT DEFIANCE (66) — Veney 12 5-6 34, Garber 5 2-2 16, Gutshall 4 2-3 11, Johnson 0 1-2 1, Fink 1 0-0 2, Cruz 1 1-2 3, Alexander, Metz, Liskey, Hebb, Jones, Patterson, Bruce, TOTALS 23 11-15 66.

LIBERTY (49) — Duff 5 0-0 13, Etzel 1 4-4 6, Damon 3 0-0 8, Hartless 4 0-0 10, Harris 4 0-0 10, Spiron, Sweeney, Chapman, Hildebrand, Durst, Wood, Staples, Stephens, Elder, Skates, TOTALS 17 4-4 49.

This article is from the Harrisonburg Daily News Record:

Boys Basketball: Region 3C First Round

Veney, Garber Guide Indians To Playoff Win

By CODY ELLIOTT Daily News-Record

Feb 18, 2023



Fort Defiance's Tyreek Veney goes up for a shot against Liberty.

Daniel Lin / DN-R

FORT DEFIANCE — Momentum is unique in sports, especially when it works in your favor.

It was undoubtedly falling Fort Defiance's way Friday.

The eighth-seeded Indians used a 24-6 run that stretched across the end of the first quarter and into half to jumpstart a convincing 66-49 victory over ninth-seeded Liberty Christian Academy in the first rounds of the Region 3C boys basketball tournament inside Don Landes Gymnasium.



Fort Defiance's Samuel Garber takes a shot against Liberty's Parker Damon.

Daniel Lin / DN-R

"That was by far our best game of the year," Fort Defiance head coach Brandon Fulk said after the win. "I've thought we've gotten good shots all season, outside of maybe two halves. I felt we just hadn't made shots. We made shots tonight. I thought we could really get whatever we wanted."

Early on, it appeared the size of the Bulldogs would give the Indians challenges throughout the night.

With 12 players standing 6 feet or taller, LCA certainly had length on Fort physically, but quick, consistent ball movement from the home team offset that and resulted in an impressive showing.

"We had a little bit different approach against their zone than what we've done this year, and I thought that was effective for us," Fulk said. "We got them out of their zone, and then I thought we adjusted well when they went man-to-man. Tyreek [Veney] was really, really good. Sam [Garber] was really. It's always good when you make shots and can get stops and get rounds. I thought we took care of the ball well. It was a complete performance."

Garber scored on a 3-pointer at the buzzer at the end of the first quarter on a well-executed full-court set out of a timeout for the Indians.

That was the first bucket of the 24-6 run, which resulted in a double-digit halftime lead for Fort and a big confidence boost for the senior Garber.

“Most of the year, we haven’t finished [that set] right,” Fulk said. “You know, I thought Sam saw the ball go in early and that’s a big deal for him. I thought he was great, especially in the first half.”

Garber finished 6-of-13 from the field, including 4-of-8 from 3-point range, to finish with 18 points. He was also big on the defensive end with 10 boards.

But he wasn’t the only Indian who had a big night as senior guard Tyreek Veney, a first-team All-Shenandoah District selection who is quickly approaching 1,000 career points, erupted for 31 points on 11-of-19 shooting, four rebounds, two assists, and a pair of steals for a stellar showing.

“We just moved the ball around, had good ball movement, and crashed the boards,” Veney said. “We just wanted it. We played good defense, held them to one shot and that’s what happened. That’s how the results came out. Once we got going, I feel like it was hard for us to be stopped. We just had so much momentum. Sam started knocking down his shots. Me? I started feeling it, and the crowd did too. We just kept rolling from there.”

The Indians had 10 assists as a team, with Garber dishing out four, and shot 51% from the field.

Henry Gutshall, a versatile senior forward with a smooth game, was his usual self, hitting 4-of-6 shots for 11 points and grabbing seven boards.

But as much as the offense shined, it was the play of senior guard Kaden Johnson, one of the area’s strongest on-the-ball defenders, as he was able to lock down LCA standout senior guard Landon Etzel.

“I just take a lot of pride in my defense,” Johnson said. “I watch a lot of film and I just key in. I need to be that guy who locks down their No. 1 [scorer]. I’m just a team player. I’m for the team. I love defense. This is what I live for. It’s what I do.”

Etzel finished 1-of-5 from the field with six points.

Johnson's final stat line was one point, two boards, an assist, and a steal, but his value for Fort doesn't go unnoticed by his teammates or coaches.

"We were really good offensively, defensively," Fulk said. "I thought the key was stopping [Etzel]. He's a really, really good player. We held him to one field goal and six points. Kaden Johnson scored one point, but he did a hell of a job on defense."

Freshman guard Gio Armendariz Cruz and junior forward Carter Fink were the only other players in the scoring column with five combined points.

But the Indians (13-9), collectively, put together their best offensive performance of the season and will need that moving forward if they hope to win.

"We gave the ball to our best scorers, and they made shots," Johnson said. "We worked hard in practice all week, designed plays for their defense, watched film, and we got the job done tonight."

Up next for Fort is a significant challenge against a familiar foe, as it travels to Penn Laird on Tuesday for a Region 3C quarterfinal at No. 1 Spotswood (21-2), which enters on an 11-game win streak.

The Indians are a former Valley District colleague of the Trailblazers, and the two teams have faced off several times in the past several postseasons, even since Fort's move to the Shenandoah District.

"A big emphasis for us is just taking care of the ball," Fulk said. "Try to limit turnovers, no lobs. Pace of play will be important. [Spotswood] wants to play at a different pace than we do, so we'll put a game plan together and see if we can go out and execute it. I told the guys coming into tonight, 'Great challenges come with

great opportunity.’ The guys embraced that thought process tonight. We’ll have to keep the same mindset next week.”

In sports, the waves of momentum can carry a team a long way, especially at the prep level.

After a big win Friday, the Indians’ confidence was oozing as they celebrated on the court with fans.

Now, as they prepare for a bigger challenge against the Trailblazers on Tuesday, they hope the momentum can take them a little further.

“We’re locked in as ever,” Veney said. “We didn’t want the season to end tonight, and it didn’t. So we’re going to go up to Spotswood, and we’ll see what happens there.”

Liberty Christian Academy 16 6 16 11 — 49

Fort Defiance 14 21 12 19 — 66

LIBERTY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY (49) — Dugg 5-11 0-0 13, Etzel 1-5 4-4 6, Hildebrand 0-4 0-0 0, Damon 3-7 0-0 8, Hartless 4-12 0-0 10, Harris 4-10 0-0 10. Totals 17-49 4-4 49.

FORT DEFIANCE (66) — Cruz 1-5 1-2 3, Hebb 0-0 0-0 0, Johnson 0-1 1-2 1, Fink 1-1 0-0 2, Garber 5-13 4-8 18, Veney 11-19 6-7 31, Jones 0-0 0-0 0, Gutshall 4-6 2-3 11. Totals 23-45 11-15 66.

3-Point Goals — Liberty Christian Academy 10-24 (Duff 3-7, Hartless 3-7, Damon 2-4, Harris 2-2), Fort Defiance 8-20 (Garber 4-8, Veney 3-8, Gutshall 1-3, Johnson 0-1). Rebounds — Liberty Christian Academy 19 (Damon 6), Fort Defiance 29 (Garber 10). Assists — Liberty Christian Academy 8 (Damon 3), Fort Defiance 10 (Garber 4). Turnovers — Liberty Christian Academy 9, Fort Defiance 7.