

Nelson County blasts Fort Defiance in second pre-season scrimmage

The Luray scrimmage gave the Fort Defiance Indians fans reason for encouragement but the second pre-season scrimmage against Nelson County did a lot to dim that encouragement. Nelson County, only a 7 - 13 team from 2023-24, dominated FDHS in nearly every quarter on the Indians home turf on November 26. Fort fell 16 - 10 in the first quarter, squeaked out a 22 - 18 victory in the second quarter, got blasted 28 - 13 in the third quarter, and was finished off by the Governors 22 - 16 in the fourth quarter. Thus the overall score was Nelson County 84, Fort Defiance 61 in the four main quarters. A fifth quarter with the substitutes playing did go Fort's way, 8 - 7.

Nelson County was a very big team with two players at least 6' 6". But it wasn't their size that killed the Indians, it was Fort's inability to do the fundamentals of shooting, passing, ball handling, and getting into position on defense. Fort's offense can be described best as this: whoever has the ball looks to shoot a three point shot or drive into the lane which is already crowded with big defenders. The FDHS shooting was horrific. Even from the free throw line they made only 6 out of 17 attempts. Three point shooting was even worse than that and nearly every player (except Gus Gutshall and perhaps Elijah Pultz) tried to shoot from beyond the arc.

The starters for FDHS were Bradley Hebb, Gio Armendariz Cruz, Elijah Pultz, Evan Braun, and Tripp Hanger. Tripp opened scoring with a nice layup. After a NCHS free throw, Gio scored on a drive. Nelson County went up 6 - 5 before Rhyland Martin hit a three pointer to give the Indians a 9 - 5 lead midway through the quarter. The only point the home team could muster the rest of the quarter was a free throw by Gio. There were many, many three point shots that fell off the mark and drives by the guards which ended up with poorly taken shots. Offensive passes were almost nonexistent. Nelson County made a miracle, banked three point heave at the buzzer to make the score 16 - 10 their way.

The Indians played somewhat better in the second quarter. Bradley scored on a drive then Tripp made another three to give Fort a 5 - 0 lead. After a NCHS bucket, Gio scored on a drive. Nelson County responded with a trey then Evan made one for FD giving them a 10 - 5 lead with 6:03 to go in the quarter. Gio scored again in close and Evan got a bucket to fall giving the home team a 14 - 8 lead. Carter Berry scored after an offensive rebound with 2:36 to go making it 16 - 10 Fort's way. Gio scored again on a drive then Elijah got two in the lane to make it 20 - 15. Bradley scored on a drive in the lane and Nelson County finished the scoring with a free throw and basket to make it 22 - 18 at the end of the quarter in favor of Fort.

The third quarter was nothing short of disastrous for the Indians. With no one in to guard one of the huge post players for Nelson, he quickly scored twice to make it 4 - 0. Two free throws by NCHS and Fort was down 6 - 0 to start the quarter. Tripp hit two three pointers (one a bank shot) but Nelson flew away with a 13 - 6 lead. Gus then took a pass from Gio and scored in the lane with 4:58 to go. It was perhaps one of only two assists the entire night for FDHS. After Nelson County had swollen their lead to 19 - 8, Jasigh Ransom made a three pointer for Fort.

The Governors poured it on again, shooting out to a 24 - 11 lead before Gio got two on a drive. The quarter ended 28 - 13 in favor of the visitors.

The fourth quarter was back and forth at first. Bradley made two free throws, Gio a layup, and Evan two of three foul shots to tie it at 6's. Gio and Bradley each scored on drives to give FDHS a 10 - 6 advantage but it didn't last. Nelson County spurted to a 13 - 10 lead before Gus again scored in the paint. Bradley and Gio finished the scoring for Fort with field goals but Nelson County pulled away to win the quarter 22 - 16.

A fifth quarter was played with substitutes but nothing noteworthy happened for Fort. Sadly, the squad made only one of six foul shots in this quarter. At the end of the quarter Fort led 8 - 7.

Grandfather's comments: Gus played well when he was in. He only played two minutes in each of the first two quarters but got more playing time in the second half, especially the fourth quarter. He had several rebounds including one offensive one. He went 2 - 3 from the field, a FAR better shooting percentage than his teammates. Unlike others, he attempted to block out the bigger opponents at times. Fort's guards tonight were the highest scorers but it cannot be said that any of them had a good game. Their shooting percentages were abysmal, there were numerous ball handling turnovers, and when one drives in the lane his eyes are just on the rim, not his teammates. What is really telling is that there were zero points scored by FDHS with a mid-range jump shot. All of their points came off three point shots, drives into the lane, or free throws. The shooting percentage for all three of these was nothing short of awful.

Fort opens the season with a trip to Broadway on December 3.