

Fort squeaks out 57 - 53 win over Broadway

In a game in which both teams had many missed shots and missed opportunities, the Fort Defiance Indians kept their unbeaten streak alive by nipping the Broadway Gobblers 59 - 55 at Broadway on December 13. It was not a pretty game by any means, but the visitors managed to come back from a 51 - 49 deficit with 3:16 to go to beat the Broadway boys, who fell to 1 - 3 on the season.

Somehow, Fort Defiance has managed to run out to a 4 - 0 record on the 2024-25 season despite horrific three point shooting, numerous turnovers, and pathetic foul shooting, especially when they needed the ball to go in. Fort's defense and rebounding, as it has throughout the season, was again the saving grace along with some poor play by the home team down the stretch.

The first quarter was very low scoring as neither team could buy a basket. Fort shot poorly but Broadway did even worse. Bradley Hebb opened the scoring with a bucket after a nice pass from Evan Braun. Broadway quickly tied the score then hit a three pointer to go up 5 - 2. This trey, with 6:38 to go in the quarter, would be the last points Broadway would score in the period. Fort got a triple from Tripp Hanger out of the corner, then two free throws from Jasigh Ransome and a putback by Rhyland Martin but that would be all the Indians could muster for the quarter as it ended 9 - 5 in favor of FDHS. Fort shot 1 - 10 from three point land for the quarter.

The second quarter was evenly played; each team scored 15 points. Gus Gutshall scored inside after a pass from Tripp then Tripp followed that up with his second three pointer to quickly give Fort a 14 - 5 lead with 6:36 left in the quarter. Broadway clawed back, though, making a triple then a jumper to close the gap to 14 - 10. Carter Berry made one of two free throws with 4:59 to go before Broadway added a field goal and foul shot to make it 15 - 13. Bradley scored on a drive after a nice pass from Gus then scored again to give FDHS a 19 - 13 lead. Broadway closed to 19 - 15 then Tripp hit his third triple of the half to make the score 22 - 15. The Gobblers answered with a three of their own. Jasigh scored in close on a feed from Gio Armandariz Cruz then BHS scored again, leaving the score FDHS 24, BHS 20 at the half.

In the first half, Fort made only 3 of 17 three point attempts; all by Tripp.

The third quarter was not good for the visitors. Gio made two free throws but then on consecutive trips down the court turned the ball over. After Broadway had pulled within two at 26 - 24, Jasigh made a three pointer then Rhyland did the same and Fort went up 32 - 26. The Indians then went stone cold except for two free throws by Rhyland. Meanwhile, Broadway pushed the ball inside to its 6'5" center Eric Santiago who led the Gobblers to a 36 - 34 advantage with 2:48 to go in the quarter. After two more empty trips down the court with Gio not finding the range again, BHS extended their lead to 39 - 34. Elijah Pultz made one of two free throws to make it 39 - 35 in favor of the Gobblers. BHS upped their lead to 41 - 35 but Jasigh managed to get a steal in the final seconds of the quarter and score, leaving it at BHS 41, FDHS 37 going into the last quarter.

Fort quickly bounced back to open the final period. Jasigh hit a three then Bradley turned a steal into two points to give FDHS the lead, 42 - 41. Bradley made one of two free throws but BHS

tied the score at 43's with 6:06 to go. Jasigh hit another big three pointer to return the lead to Fort, 46 - 43 then, after Gus had missed a pair of free throws and Broadway scoring inside, Evan Braun knocked a trey down to put FD ahead 49 - 45. Evan then made a nice steal but missed both of his free throws and BHS scored to make it 49 - 47 with 3:43 to go.

The last four minutes were frenetic. Santiago tried to get BHS back in charge by hitting two free throws then scoring in the lane to give the Gobblers a 51 - 49 advantage with 3:16 left. After another Fort missed three, Santiago again got the ball in the lane but his shot was blocked by Evan. Evan then banged in a three pointer from the corner and Fort was back on top, 52 - 51 with 2:27 to go. Elijah scored on a nice pass from Carter Berry with 1:45 to make it 54 - 51. BHS scored again then FDHS turned the ball over with 1:29 to go leading only by a point. Broadway was unable to score then Gio, who had massive trouble finding the basket all night long, finally scored his first field goal in the paint with 1:11 left giving FDHS a 56 - 53 lead.

The last minute was especially hectic. BHS called a timeout with 56.0 left, then missed two free throws and a three pointer. Instead of freezing the ball, Fort launched another errant three pointer. Bradley was fouled but he missed both of his attempts with 10.5 seconds left. BHS earned the ball back after a jump was called but promptly threw the ball away, allowing Fort to hold the ball. Tripp was fouled and made one of two free throws to make the final score 57 - 53.

Jasigh led the Indians with 15, Tripp had 10, and Bradley had 9. Ten players for Fort scored but the free throw shooting was abysmal, 10 - 22. Samuel Post led BHS with 20; Santiago added 16.

Grandfather's note: This is a game Gus will quickly put behind him. By my count, he had six rebounds and he made one of three field goal attempts. He and his teammates should celebrate the fact that they played poorly but still managed to win and are still undefeated.

Fort's next game is on Monday night with a rematch against Turner Ashby.

Here's Fort's box score

Name	2 Pt Goals	3 Pt Goals	Free Throws	Total
John Whetzel	0	0	0-0	0
Bradley Hebb	4	0	1-6	9
Jasigh Ransome	2	3	2-2	15
Gio Armendariz Cruz	1	0	2-2	4
Miguel Uribe	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	2	0-2	6
Carter Berry	0	0	1-2	1
Rhylan Martin	1	1	2-2	7
Elijah Pultz	1	0	1-2	3
Tripp Hanger	0	3	1-2	10
Connor Batten	0	0	0-0	0
Ayden Thornton	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	1	0	0-2	2
TOTAL	10	9	10-22	57

The Harrisonburg Daily News Record had this story about the game:

BOYS BASKETBALL | FORT DEFIANCE 57, BROADWAY 53 Indians grind out win over Gobblers to remain perfect

By JOHN BREEDEN
Daily News-Record
Dec 14, 2024

BROADWAY —Gutting through late-game situations continues to be the story of Fort Defiance's season after four games.

The latest was Friday night at Broadway High School when the Indians fell behind the Gobblers midway through the third quarter after holding a steady lead for the bulk of the first half. In the fourth quarter, the Indians pushed past the Gobblers and made some key plays down the stretch to hang on and win 57-53 in non-district action to remain unbeaten on the campaign.

"I think the whole game was just chaotic," Fort head coach Mike Gale said. "We like that to a point. I'm proud of the guys. Things didn't go our way and Broadway played tough. They get after it. That's a credit to [head coach Dwight Walton] and how he has those teams year after year. Proud of the guys — another road game, getting behind there in the fourth quarter, and doing what we needed to do to pull one out."

Junior forward Evan Braun's 3-pointer with just over two minutes remaining in the fourth period put the Indians ahead by one. Junior guard Giovanni Armendariz Cruz added to Fort's lead by scoring a basket with just 1:11 remaining on the clock.

Up three with eight seconds left, junior guard Tripp Hanger made one of two shots from the free throw line to put the Indians ahead by four, ultimately sealing the deal on the victory. "It felt really relieving," Hanger said. "Hitting that shot made it feel like we sealed the deal there. Everybody played well tonight. I feel like we just did an all-around good job, offensively and defensively. ... We're a pretty good ball club."

Junior guard Jasigh Ransome led the Indians with 15 points while Hanger added 10 points. For Broadway, senior guard Samuel Post scored a game-high 20 points while senior forward Eric Santiago registered 16 points.

The disappointment reigned through the BHS gymnasium when Hanger nailed the last-second free throw to put the game out of reach for the Gobblers. The rather young Gobblers team was up against the up-tempo, fast-paced Indians, and in the end, fell short in the waning minutes of the fourth quarter.

"They're very good at what they do," Walton said. "They get in passing lanes, they're very active, they have a lot of energy — we're still just trying to find our way into the rights and the wrongs and reading the defense on the back sides and just trying to attack. I think there's still hesitation."

Their record might not reflect it, but Walton has seen immense growth in his team since day one of the season. “We’re making improvements,” Walton said. “We’re getting there. I think their spirit is good. We’ve just got to continue to keep working and this team has got the ability in there — it’s just taking time to do it.”

It was a heartfelt set of pre-game ceremonies as BHS honored the Vietnam veterans and Buddy Walton, Dwight’s late father, who passed away in February. The school revealed a giant United States flag that now hangs in the rafters of the gymnasium just above the sideline desk. Dwight recalls his father being adamant about having an American flag hanging in the rafters. When he passed away, Dwight said his mom reminded him how much he wanted it. Now, whether it’s practice or a game, Walton will always have a reminder of his father when he sees the stars and stripes hanging above his head.

“I’m very thankful she stayed on me,” Walton said. “Between my brother, my mother, and I making this happen, it’s cool. For me, I can walk back in this gym the rest of my life — regardless if I’m coaching or I’m here coming to a game — not that I need something to make me remember my dad or think about him, but I’m certainly going to think about him every time that flag drops.”

The Indians (4-0) face non-district Turner Ashby on the road Monday at 7 p.m., while the Gobblers (1-3) face Valley District rival Rockbridge County on the road Tuesday at 7 p.m. It’s been the story of grit for the Indians so far as they continue to prevail in tight-score affairs. They’ve won some games, but Gale said the Indians understand that there’s a long season ahead and they’re going to keep improving. With so many nail-biters to kick off the season, Gale believes his team has been battle-tested early.

“It can’t hurt,” Gale said. “Of course, you want to win as many as you can. We’ve been fortunate enough to pull some out. You’d think this is one of those where you’re not out of it and able to do enough to pull things out. We’re going to continue playing tough teams and continue to get better and hopefully improve.”

Hanger believes Fort’s ability to gut out victories in late-game scenarios is not only a testament to their talent, but their dedication to the sport of basketball. “It shows we’ve got a lot of heart,” Hanger said. “We’ve got a lot of good talent and we’re working pretty hard as a squad.”

Fort Defiance 9 15 13 20 — 57

Broadway 5 15 21 12 — 53

FORT DEFIANCE (4-0): Whetzel 0 0-0 0, Hebb 4 1-4 9, Ransome 5 2-2 15, Armendariz Cruz 1 2-2 4, Uribe 00-0 0, Braun 2 0-4 6, Berry 0 1-2 1, Martin 2 1-1 7, Pultz 1 1-2 3, Hanger 3 1-2 10, Batten 0 0-0 0, Thornton 00-0 0, Gutshall 1 0-2 2. Totals 19 10-22 57.

BROADWAY (1-3): Rhodes 0 0-2 0, Glovier 2 0-2 4, Dagnoli 0 0-0 0, Ritchie 0 0-0 0, Post 7 0-0 20, Griffin 0 0-0 0, Garber 0 0-0 0, Santiago 7 2-2 16, Burkhalter 5 2-4 13, Trout 0 0-0 0. Totals 21 4-10 53.

3-Point Goals — Fort Defiance 9 (Ransome 3, Braun 2, Martin, Hanger 3), Broadway 4 (Post, Burkhalter).