

## **Stuarts Draft dominates Fort Defiance 70 – 55**

The Stuarts Draft Cougars built up a huge first half lead then coasted to a 70 – 55 win over the Fort Defiance Indians on January 17 in the Fort gym. The Cougars, 9 – 4 (3 – 0) used a 23 – 10 second quarter to bust open a game that was tight at first. The loss, Fort's second consecutive and fifth in its last seven games, left Fort with a 7 – 5 record, 1 – 2 in the Shenandoah District.

The first quarter was competitive. Tripp opened with a three pointer from the corner but the Cougars answered with a trey of their own. Gio Armendariz Cruz scored on a drive but again the Cougars responded to tie the score. Tripp had another three pointer and Gio scored in close again to give Fort a 10 – 5 lead with 3:54 to go. The lead would be short lived. SDHS scored the next six points to take a 11 – 10 lead before Carter Berry took a nice pass from Bradley and put the home team back ahead. The Cougars regained the lead at 13 – 12 but Tripp banged in his third three pointer of the quarter to give Fort a 15 – 13 lead. It would be the last lead Fort would have. Draft scored the last four points in the quarter to take a 17 – 15 lead at the end of the period.

Gio tied the score with a drive to start the second quarter but the visitors knocked in another three pointer to go up 20 – 17. Gio got two more on a drive making it 20 – 19. Draft scored the next four to take a 24 – 19 lead. Gio then hit a three pointer but after that Fort's offense died. Draft scored the next 13 consecutive points to extend their lead to 37 – 22. Rhyland Martin got Fort's last points of the quarter with a trey but the Cougars ran out to a comfortable 40 – 25 lead at the half.

In the first half, Fort only had four different players score. They shot 5 – 16 from beyond the arc and 0 – 3 from the foul line. It was hard to watch.

Fort came out cold to start the second half. Stuarts Draft scored the first nine points of the quarter which put the game out of reach at 49 – 25. Bradley Hebb got two on an out-of-bounds play, Gio scored in the paint, and Carter made one of two free throws but Draft kept pouring it on to take their biggest lead, 56 – 30, with three minutes left to go in the quarter. Gio made another three pointer and a deuce and Evan Braun made a three at the end of the quarter but Draft still led 58 – 38 going into the fourth.

Fort made a mini-run in the fourth but never were able to get closer than a ten point deficit. Bradley had two on a drive, Jasigh Ransome two, Tripp another three pointer, and Bradley a layup to make it 63 – 51. After a Draft goal, Jasigh was fouled while making a three pointer then made his foul shot to get to 65 – 55 but that was it for Indian scoring for the night. The final was 70 – 55 in favor of Stuarts Draft.

The Indians switched to man-to-man defense for the second half but their impotent offense wouldn't allow them to catch up. Jenkins and Graber each had 18 for the Cougars while Moore tossed in 14. Gio scored 22 for the Indians and Tripp had twelve.

Grandfather's notes: This game, like many this season, showed how Fort has not been taught an offense that will win games. Time after time, the Indians went one-and-done when they had the

ball and most of the time the shot taken was ill-advised. In Fort's offense, players stand around waiting for the guards to drive in the crowded lane and toss up a prayer. There is little teamwork; play is selfish and uncoordinated. It is tough for seasoned Indian fans to watch opposing teams work the ball for a good shot then see the Indians either throw up a three point shot with little chance of going in or driving into the lane, going one-on-four, and taking a horrible shot, all without any objections from the Fort coaching staff.

As I have written time after time, the Fort players have never been taught how to shoot the basketball. For the season, they shoot under 50% *from the free throw line*. Tonight they were 4 for 10 from the charity stripe. It is worse from beyond the three point arc. Tonight they made 9 of 31 three point shots.

Gus is frustrated and for good reason. Tonight he played less than three minutes in the first half and only 2:02 in the second half. He sat on the bench the entire fourth quarter. When he played, he got three rebounds including one offensive one. He was wide open under the basket a couple of times but, of course, was not passed the ball. Why pass when you can take a wild three pointer or fling up a brick on a drive? I am disgusted with his teammates but even moreso at the coaching staff. Their substitution philosophy is based on favoritism instead of data. There is no deference given to seniors who have stuck with the program for years. Their offensive coaching strategy is non-existent. Turnovers, bad shots, and selfish play seem to be fine with them. Another player's grandfather remarked to me that they don't coach, they just watch the game.

Tonight, like the previous game at Fort against Staunton, the gym was much less than half full. There were empty rows of seats everywhere. Gus, as always, had his family there but apparently other fans have decided this type of play isn't worth watching. This is sad, especially for the boys.

Fort's next game is a home game against Clarke County on Monday, January 20.

Here's Fort's box score:

<b>Name</b>	<b>2 Pt Goals</b>	<b>3 Pt Goals</b>	<b>Free Throws</b>	<b>Total</b>
John Whetzel	0	0	0-0	0
Bradley Hebb	3	0	0-2	6
Jasigh Ransome	1	1	1-1	6
Gio Armendariz Cruz	7	2	2-5	22
Miguel Uribe	0	0	0-0	0
Evan Braun	0	1	0-0	3
Carter Berry	1	0	1-2	3
Rhylan Martin	0	1	0-0	3
Elijah Pultz	0	0	0-0	0
Tripp Hanger	0	4	0-0	12
Connor Batten	0	0	0-0	0
Ayden Thornton	0	0	0-0	0
Gus Gutshall	0	0	0-0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4-10</b>	<b>55</b>

The Staunton News Leader had this article about the game:

## **Draft boys win**

FORT DEFIANCE — Stuarts Draft beat Fort Defiance 70-55 Friday night in Shenandoah District boys basketball.

Landon Graber and Donovan Jenkins both finished with 18 points to lead Stuarts Draft (8-4, 3-0 Shenandoah).

Draft led by just two after one, but a 14-point second quarter by Graber — six buckets, including a pair of 3s — helped lift the Cougars to a 15-point halftime lead.

Derrick Moore had 14 for the Cougars.

Stuarts Draft is at Central Woodstock Saturday before traveling to Riverheads and home against Wilson next week.

Gio Armendariz Cruz scored 22 for Fort Defiance (7-5, 1-2 Shenandoah). Tripp Hanger added 12 for Fort.

Fort Defiance is home against Clarke and Waynesboro with a road trip to Wilson Memorial in between next week.