

Ft. Jennings Wins its First Crown

Kalida comes from 20 points back, but rally falls short in last minute of finals
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Ft. Jennings is the Putnam County High School basketball tournament champion. For the first time in the 34-year history of the classic, this can be said.

The Musketeers, whose only previous tournament trophy was the runner-up cup in 1944, handed Kalida a 62-59 setback in the final game Saturday night at Glandorf. And quite a victory it was as the champs seemed well on their way to an easy conquest with an 18-point advantage starting the final quarter when Kalida caught fire and came within one point of tying the score in the last two minutes.

Kalida, which almost pulled the game out of the fire, was also in quest of its first tournament crown. The Wildcats also placed second once – in 1945 – and took the consolation prize in 1953 and 1954, but have never been able to take home the laurels. Third place this year went to Ottawa Sts. Peter and Paul which defeated Glandorf 72-54 at Ottoville.

It was the second time the Ottawa team won the tournament consolation prize. SPPS, which owns one tournament title, has finished second four times. Glandorf has finished second once, and third once, but never won the crown either.

In Friday night's semi-final round, Ft. Jennings downed Glandorf 70-62 at Ottawa and Kalida whipped Ottawa SPPS 78-60 at Ottoville.

Musketeers Hang on for 62-59 Victory

Ft. Jennings pulled away in the second and third quarters and was holding a 50-32 advantage over Kalida in the championship tilt Saturday night before the Wildcats began to hit with the regularity which had advanced them to the finals and almost snatched the trophy which Jennings thought that they had sewed up tight by that time.

In the final round, Kalida hit 10 of 16 field goal attempts and added seven free throws on 10 tries as they almost doubled their score. Meanwhile, Jennings was held to 12 on four goals and four free throws.

The Wildcats pulled within one point in the last two minutes, but time ran out on them before they could take the lead.

The first quarter of the game was a roaring battle with the score tied at 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 before Jennings began to pull away.

Tom Wehri opened the barrage when he scored a free throw for Kalida. Jennings' Dan Recker did likewise and then the teams traded buckets in fast succession.

The scoring went like this: Bill Felkey for Kalida, Larry Adams for Kalida, Dennis Luebrecht for Jennings, John Fanger for Kalida, Luebrecht again, Felkey for Kalida, John VonSossan for Jennings and Ron VonderEmbse for Kalida to give the Wildcats their last lead of the game at 11-9.

THEN VINCE SCHIMMOELLER put the Musketeers ahead to stay. He hit two goals and added a free throw before the period was over. Ft. Jennings held a 14-11 edge after the first eight minutes.

The new champs pulled away fast in the second quarter, scoring eight points before Kalida could hit again. Luebrecht connected on two goals. Recker made good on a pair of free throws and Bob Heitmeyer goaled to give them a 22-11 advantage.

Jim Smiedebush hit a free throw for Kalida and Fanger added a goal. Heitmeyer hit again for Jennings and Kalida's Adams retaliated. Then Jennings upped their lead to 30-16 as Schimmoeller goaled, Luebrecht made good on a pair of foul shots and VonSossan goaled.

As time was running out in the first half, Wehri hit for Kalida, Schimmoeller regained the points for Jennings and VonderEmbse scored again for the Wildcats to make the intermission score 32-20.

THE MUSKETEERS CONTINUED their onward surge through the third stanza. Kalida opened the second-half scoring as VonderEmbse hit from underneath. The teams traded buckets as VonSossan hit for Jennings and Adams connected Kalida.

Luebrecht and Heitmeyer hit consecutive goals for the Musketeers, Fanger scored for Kalida and then VonSossan, Recker and Luebrecht racked up three in a row for the winners to make it 44-26.

Adams goaled for Kalida midway in the period and then Heitmeyer hit two straight for Jennings to give them a 20-point lead, their largest of the game, at 48-28.

Adams goaled again for Kalida and Heitmeyer retaliated for Jennings. In the last few seconds of the third round, VonderEmbse made a pair of free throws and the period ended with Jennings on top, 50-32.

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KALIDA BEGAN its recovery act as soon as the whistle opened the final period. Fanger, VonderEmbse and Wehri paced the attack. VonderEmbse hit nine of his 19 points in that round and Wehri added seven while Fanger hit six. Both Wehri and VonderEmbse hit three field goals without a miss.

Fanger opened with a pair of free throws and VonderEmbse goaled to cut the margin to 50-36. Recker goaled for Jennings and Heitmeyer followed with a free throw. VonderEmbse added another Kalida point and VonSossan hit for the champs.

At this time, Kalida added nine straight points. Fanger goaled, VonderEmbse goaled and added a free toss. Felkey goaled and VonderEmbse hit two more buckets to cut the lead to 55-46.

VonSossan retaliated for the winners. Then Adams and Wehri hit consecutive buckets for Kalida, while Wehri added a free toss. Paul Metzger made a foul shot for Jennings to make the score 58-51.

Wehri hit again for Kalida, Fanger scored and Wehri added another with 1:40 showing the clock to make the score read 58-57. The crowd went wild as Jennings took a time out.

JENNINGS REGAINED its championship poise during the time out and came back to score on Recker's goal and VonSossan's free throw.

Felkey goaled for Kalida to make it 61-59 with just one minute left in the game and Jennings started to play control ball. In their attempt to regain possession of the ball, Kalida committed several fouls in the last minute but Jennings made a couple of vital shots.

Heitmeyer added the insurance point with 20 seconds remaining. He missed his second attempt and Jennings took the rebound to run out the clock.

Both teams shot well and put-up good defenses during the game. Jennings held the edge in most departments with their well-balanced attack.

They made 26 of 50 field goal attempts for a very good 52 per cent. The Musketeers hit 43 per cent the first half and 57 per cent the second. From the free throw stripe, they made 10 of 24.

Kalida took 52 shots, making 24 of them for 46 percent. In the first three periods, they were rolling along with a respectable 39 percent. But in their last-ditch rally, they

connected on 10 of 16 for 63 per cent. They made 11 of 19 from the line.

There were 12 personal fouls called on Ft. Jennings and 15 on Kalida. However, 10 of Kalida's were called on two players, as they lost both Adams and Wehri during the height of their fourth-period surge. Jennings had no one in foul trouble.

Ft. Jennings

VonSossan – 7/12 1/3 15 2. Schimmoeller – 4/7 1/2 9 2.
Metzger – 0/1 1/2 1 3. Recker – 3/10 3/8 9 3. Luebrecht
– 7/12 2/4 16 0. Heitmeyer – 5/8 2/5 12 2.
Totals – 26/50 10/24 62 12

Kalida

Adams – 6/15 0/1 12 5. VonderEmbse – 7/8 5/6 19 2.
Fanger – 4/12 2/3 10 0. Felkey – 3/9 1/2 7 2. Wehri –
4/6 2/4 10 5. Smiedebush – 0/2 1/3 1 0. Verhoff – 0/0
0/0 0 1.
Totals – 24/52 11/19 59 15