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Bernie's Season Ends With District Loss to Scott County Central

MARCH 02ND 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Bernie's Season Ends With District Loss to Scott County Central

Bloomfield, Missouri – The season came to an end for the Bernie Mules with the defending state champions Scott County Central boys basketball team defeating them in the District Championship Friday evening.

The Mules led by as much as 15 points in the first half but came up short when the top-seeded Braves rallied from behind tallying 53 points in the second half to secure their District win.

The Mules came out hot in the first two quarters leading by 13 points going into the locker room at the half.

“In the first half they played us all man and we were able to use time management,” commented Bernie head basketball coach Brad Botsch. “It is almost like in football when a team controls the offense by putting the ball on the ground and continuing to run. We are not a strong defensive team and the way we were able to compete a lot this year was by having ball-control with our ball-handling skills. We were able to execute very well in the first half and kept their scoring down, but in the second half they really stepped up.”

Braves' powerhouse Jeffery Porter hit his only 3-pointer of the game at the buzzer at the end of the third period to put Scott County Central in the lead. Porter went

on to score a game-high 39 points for the Braves.

“They were hungry,” stated Botsch. “They are the best basketball program in the history of the state of Missouri and there is a reason for that. Their kids compete extremely hard and are tough. They hurt us on the glass all night long and that’s why we have to hold the ball because we are not very big and don’t play good defense. We have got to have the ball in our hands so the other team doesn’t get possessions because when they do they are either going to score or get the offensive stick back. Scott Central was relentless and I knew even at halftime with a 13-point lead we were going to have our hands completely full to try to win this game.”

Senior Caleb Ellenburg paced the Mules with a team-high 25 points.

Senior Brandon Sparks recorded 18 points including one trey.

Matt Vernon, also a senior, recorded 14 points including one 3-pointers before fouling out late in the game.

“Caleb, Brandon, and Matt have really had to carry us offensively,” Botsch said. “Caleb averaged about 20 to 21 points a game and Brandon and Matt were right at 13 or 14. We just don’t have much depth or a lot of scoring from other sources. We had to find ways to score and Caleb carried that load. If you want to win a district championship you have to get stops and we weren’t able to get stops. That has a lot to do with how good they are.”

The Bernie Mules (22-6) will graduate six seniors off their team. They won the Holcomb Invitation Tournament this year along with the Bloomfield Christmas Tournament and the Stoddard County Athletic Association (SCAA) Tournament.

“Just tremendous kids,” Botsch continued. “I cannot say enough about our seniors and the things they have done. We are going to really miss them. They are going to be great, productive individuals and have a lot to be proud of. This is what we play for and we are disappointed we didn’t win tonight, but we couldn’t be more proud of a group of kids. It was a great season. It just didn’t end like we wanted it to.”

Final Score #1 Scott County Central 73, #2 Bernie 63

Bernie 17 16 15 15 - 63

Scott County 14 6 31 22 - 73

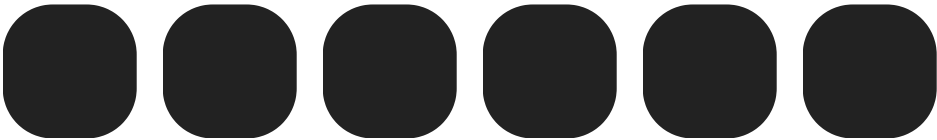
Bernie (63) – Matt Vernon 14, Brandon Sparks 18, Caleb Ellenburg 25, Devin Trammell 4, Gavin Smith 2. FG 25, FT 11/12, F 19. (3-pointers: Vernon 1, Sparks 1. Fouled Out: Vernon).

Scott County Central (73) – Jeffery Porter 39, Tyus Banks 2, Drake Kesler 5, Trevion Moore 8, Javonta Daniel 13, Matthew Blissett 6. FG 29, FT 12/19, F 15. (3-pointers: Kesler 1, Porter 1, Moore 1. Fouled Out: None).

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Bernie Wins in Overtime Headed to District Championship

FEBRUARY 27TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Bernie Wins in Overtime Headed to District Championship

Bloomfield, Missouri – Noah Vandiver hit a basket with just seconds left on the clock to propel Bloomfield into overtime and keep the Wildcats' dream of heading into a District Championship alive for another four minutes.

"We knew he would make a great play," commented Bloomfield head coach Jason Karnes. "He got the ball there and got us into overtime."

Bernie had a job to do and it was up to their upperclassman to come through and they did right down to the last seconds of the overtime portion of the game.

"We've been kind of after these guys to get it into another gear all year, and especially here late", stated Bernie head coach Brad Botsch. "I thought I saw a substantial difference in the way Matt and Caleb picked it up and were not going to be denied in the second half. These are great kids, but sometimes they are not the toughest kids. I thought they turned it up to another level, and that's kind of how we were able to make a run late."

Bloomfield led 52-51 with just over a minute left in overtime before Caleb Ellenburg hit a 3-pointer putting the Mules back on top 54-52. The Wildcats tied things up at 54-54 when Noah Vandiver hit a shot with 9.9 seconds left.

Caleb Ellenburg was fouled with 4 seconds remaining and made both of his free throws to secure the win for Bernie. Final Score Bernie 55, Bloomfield 54.

"It was a real strategic game all night long," Botsch said. "It seemed like every possession was absolutely critical because it was so close. Fortunately, Caleb made a solid drive to the basket, got fouled and put it in the hole."

Nathan Newell pushed the ball the length of the court after the free throw with less than 3 seconds remaining and shot the ball hitting the rim, but the ball did not fall.

Despite the missed shot at the buzzer Nathan Newell has had a tremendous season along with Tyler Battles. Both are juniors and will return to the court next year for the Wildcats.

"Those two probably don't get the publicity that they deserve," commented Karnes. "Those two had an outstanding year and a solid game tonight. They had to play up last year as sophomores and it paid off this year. They have been very

consistent on both ends of the floor and as our captains they do a great job leading our team. I am so very proud of them. They work very hard for us. Their future is very bright.”

“Our kids’ played really hard,” continued Coach Karnes. “That was just a great game between two teams that play the right way. I am so proud of my kids. They battled until the end. We wish we would have made some better decisions on a couple of things, but that’s the way it goes. Sometimes you catch a break here and there, and sometimes you don’t. But I am extremely proud of my kids!”

Caleb Ellenburg paced Bernie with a game-high 22 points. Fourteen of those points came after the third quarter. Ellenburg also hit one 3-pointer.

“Caleb’s a go-to guy and we have to got have him provide some offense, especially if it’s not falling from other sources,” state Botsch. “Fortunately, the kids were unselfish enough to get him the ball when he got open and he put it in the basket.”

Matt Vernon finished with 19 points for the Mules including two 3-pointers.

Noah Vandiver recorded a team-high 19 points for Bloomfield. Tyler Battles tallied 13 points including one trey. Nathan Newell finished with 8 points including one 3-pointer. Peyton Bell recorded one trey.

“They do a lot of things well,” Botsch said of the Wildcats. “Jason and Tyler do an outstanding job. Beating a good team three times in one year is very difficult to do, especially twice on their home floor so we feel fortunate to survive and advance. But hats off to Bloomfield and how hard their kids work. I told them as we were going through he line after the game ‘they are all sophomores and juniors and are likely to be a real juggernaut next year because of how tough they played this year and the job their coaching staff does’. They have got a lot of good basketball in front of them and we feel fortunate to beat them tonight.”

Bloomfield will return next year with all of their players, as they do not have any seniors currently on the team. They will be a force on the court again next year!

“We are very disappointed tonight and would love to be playing the ball again Friday, but looking ahead if these guys get in there and work like they always have they can accomplish some great things next year,” stated Karnes. “The future is very bright and I hope we take advantage of that next year. They are a

special group. We got to 16 wins this year and had a JV that had a really good year. We are going to move up some kids and have good competition within our team to get playing time. It's going to be a fun summer and hopefully a competitive year."

Bernie (22-5) will meet defending state champions Scott County Central in the Class 2, District 1 Championship on Friday at 7:15 p.m. in Bloomfield.

"There has only been one year in the past nine years since Jason and I have been together that we haven't played in the district championship," Botsch said. "it is always a special time when you get to play for a championship and these kids have won 3 out of 3 this year. To get their fourth is going to take an unbelievable effort against Scott Central because they looked outstanding tonight and our guys are going to have to do a lot of things well to compete and beat them. But we are going to do everything we can to prepare them and we will be ready to go."

Final Score #2 Bernie 56, #3 Bloomfield 54

Bloomfield 13 14 7 13 7 - 54

Bernie 15 10 7 15 9 - 56

Bloomfield (54) – Peyton Bell 4, Nathan Newell 8, Austin Bon 4, Tyler Battles 13, Noah Vandiver 19, Alex Gibbs 6. FG 19, FT 13/18, F 17. (3-pointers: Bell 1, Newell 1, Battles 1. Fouled Out: Gibbs).

Bernie (56) – Matt Vernon 19, Caleb Ellenburg 22, Brandon Sparks 5, Devin Trammell 4, Gavin Smith 6. FG 20, FT 12/15, F 17. (3-pointers: Vernon 2, Sparks 1, Ellenburg 1. Fouled Out: None).

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Mules Take Sting Out of Hornets in First Round of Districts

FEBRUARY 25TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Mules Take Sting Out of Hornets in First Round of Districts

Bloomfield, Missouri – The Class 2, District 1 boys basketball Tournament finally got under way on Tuesday evening at Bloomfield.

The #2 seeded Bernie Mules defeated the #7 seeded Holcomb in a very convincing victory. Final score 60-40.

Caleb Ellenburg scored first for the Mules. He earned two buckets at the charity stripe.

The Mules were able to jump out and lead 13-2 in the first period before Holcomb could answer with a couple of buckets. By half-time Bernie lead 26-10. They continued to score double digits in each of the four quarters with the #13 being the magic number for three periods.

Ellenburg paced the Mules with a game-high 28 points including two 3-pointers. Brandon Sparks also finished in double digits scoring 15 points including 3 treys.

Holcomb's Preston Sikes finished with 11 points including one 3-pointer. He was the only Hornet's athlete to score in double digits. Skyler Johnson hit one trey.

Bernie will now face Bloomfield in the semifinal game slated to begin around 7:15 p.m. on Thursday, February 26th. The other semifinal game is between top-seeded Scott County Central and #4 seeded South Pemiscot. That game begins at 6:00 p.m.

Final Score #2 Bernie 60, #7 Holcomb 40

Holcomb 4 6 14 16 - 40

Bernie 13 13 21 13 - 60

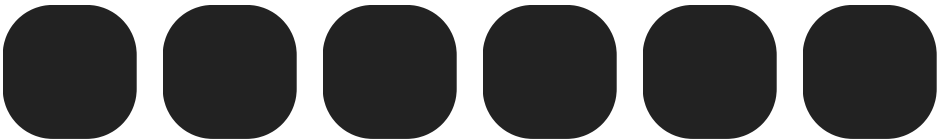
Holcomb (40) – Skyler Johnson 5, Jordan Massey 8, Zach Bridges 2, Preston Sikes 11, Jacob Adkins 2, Dustin Black 3, Chance Davis 4, Ben Vance 5. FG 17, FT 4/7, F 16. (3-pointers: Johnson 1, Sikes 1. Fouled Out: None).

Bernie (60) – Matt Vernon 8, Login Wood 3, Brandon Sparks 15, Caleb Ellenburg 28, Gavin Smith 2, Trey Kirkpatrick 2, Gavin Brown 2. FG 21, Ft 12/14, F 10. (3-pointers: Sparks 3, Ellenburg 2, Wood 1. Fouled Out: None).

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Mules Kick Twin Rivers in Double Overtime

FEBRUARY 04TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Mules Kick Twin Rivers in Double Overtime

Bernie, Missouri – It was a thriller game in the Bernie with the Mules kicking Twin Rivers in double overtime 66 – 64 Tuesday evening.

“Beating a good team three times is very tough thing to do,” Bernie coach Brad Botsch said in a press release to the ShowMe Times. “Twin Rivers came in here and played our butts off. They were more physical and really hurt us on the glass and just had more fire and desire overall. We were fortunate to hang on for the win.”

Matt Vernon recorded a game-high 31 points for the Mules including two 3-pointers.

Brandon Sparks finished with 23 points including three treys.

Caleb Ellenburg calculated 10 points.

“We’ve got some things to work on before the end of the year,” Botsch commented. “It is extremely important for our success that our kids are 100% bought in with heart and soul. I don’t think we have had that ‘epiphany’ yet where the sense of urgency that the end of the year is upon us. I hope we find that soon.”

Seth Snider tallied a team-high 20 points for Twin Rivers.

Andrew Mittelstadt recorded 16 points.

Chance Wilkerson finished with 14 points including a trey.

Bernie (19-2) will host the Notre Dame Bulldogs on Friday. Game time 6:00 p.m.

Final Score Bernie 66, Twin Rivers 64 Double Overtime

Twin Rivers 8 15 14 15 66 - 64

Bernie 13 13 13 13 68 - 66

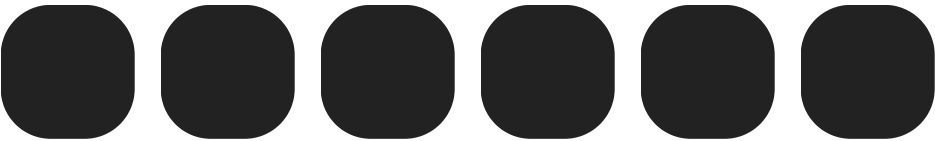
Twin Rivers (64) – Jase Worley 5, Chance Wilkerson 14, Andrew Mittelstadt 16, Mason Douglas 9, Seth Snider 20. FG 27, FT 5/11, F 18. (3-pointers: Worley 1, Wilkerson 1, Douglas 3. Fouled Out: None).

Bernie (66) – Matt Vernon 31, Brandon Sparks 23, Caleb Ellenburg 10, Gavin smith 2. FG 22, FT 17/21, F 16. (3-pointers: Sparks 3, Vernon 2. Fouled Out: None).

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Bernie Mules Defeat Puxico Improving Record to 15-2

Bernie Mules Defeat Puxico Improving Record to 15-2

Puxico, Missouri – The Bernie Mules varsity boys basketball team improved their record on the road Friday evening 15-2 by defeated the Puxico Indians 64 – 54.

“It was a grind tonight, but we found a way to get the ‘W’,” stated Bernie’s coach Brad Botsch. “Puxico is always a tough place to play, and we dug just deep enough to get out of there with a win.”

Caleb Ellenburg keeps pounding it out for the Mules recording another game-high 26 points including one trey.

“I thought Ellenburg stepped up his play tonight for us and we need him to continue to be a force for us,” Botsch stated. “If we can ever get everyone having a good night on the same night we could really be tough. Our seniors realize there isn’t a lot of time left in their careers here and they need to start feeling that urgency to take the next step in effort and coachability.

“We have to have the attitude of never being satisfied and keep pushing forward. I look forward to seeing what we can do in the county tournament next week,” continued Botsch. “We have played most of these teams at least once and I am anxious to see how our kids play in Round 2.”

Brandon Sparks recorded 23 points for Bernie hitting four 3-pointers.

Puxico’s leading athlete was Zack Tucker who tallied 24 points including a couple of 3-pointers. Seth Luttrell added 18 points.

Bernie and Puxico both begin play on Monday evening at the 2015 SCAA varsity boys basketball tournament. Top-seeded Bernie will play #8 Richland at 6:30 p.m. and #6 seed Puxico Indians play the #3 Dexter Bearcats at 8:00 p.m.

Final score Bernie 64, Puxico 54

Bernie 18 9 19 18 - 64

Puxico 18 7 14 16 - 54

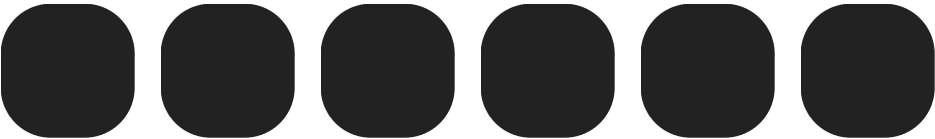
Bernie (64) – Matt Vernon 9, Brandon Sparks 23, Caleb Ellenburg 26, Devin Tramell 3, Gavin Smith 3, FG 20, FT 17/27, F 13. (3-pointers: Brandon Sparks 4, Matt Vernon 1, Caleb Ellenburg 1, Devin Trammell 1. Fouled Out: Trammell).

Puxico (54) – Levi Woods 4, Chris Siler 4, Dalton King 2, Zach McCoy 2, Seth Luttrell 18, Zach Tucker 24. FG 19, FT 14/15, F 18. (3-pointers: Luttrell 2, Fouled Out: Corey Pratt).

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