

Indians falter in 4th; fall to Solon

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Ahead by eight points over Solon going into the fourth quarter Tuesday night at home, the inexperienced Marion boys played not to lose.

So they lost, 41-38.

Rattled throughout the final stanza, the Indians got off just one shot (and made it) in the last period.

Meanwhile, they threw the ball away 10 times in the face of a relentless Solon defense.

"We became way too passive," said Marion Coach Mike Manderscheid in trying to explain his team's late-game collapse. "We've got some young guys playing, and they didn't handle the pressure situation very well.

"Solon got to playing tighter on us, and we started making passes that weren't there. You can't give a team like that so many extra possessions."

Veteran Solon Coach Brad Randall, on the other hand, said his Spartan defenders suddenly got tough when they needed to.

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“Our trademark as a team has always been to hold other teams under 40 points. And this year, in order to win games, we have to do that.

“Marion was able to handle our press in the first half, so we switched defenses and started executing a lot better. And I think the Marion kids got a little tight at the end.”

Meanwhile, Solon star senior guard Turner Wentzien took over the game.

Having played on Solon’s state championship runner-up team two years ago and a minor cog in last season’s 21-3 district champ squad, Wentzien is battle-tested.

“He had an unbelievable game,” Randall said. “He plays to win. And tonight he showed his true colors.

“He made key baskets when we needed them. And in the fourth quarter he played with a sense of urgency. He made big plays on defense.”

Wentzien led all scorers with 18 points. He scored the first basket of the game on a lay-up and picked up the rest in the second half while almost single-handedly bringing his team back from a 10-point halftime deficit.

Manderscheid hopes his youthful team, decimated by the loss of its starters from last year, similarly learns how to win.

“When we got lazy on one of our passes when the game was close (Wentzien) dove for it and got the ball,” Manderscheid said. “He knew what was needed in that situation. I told our kids we’re looking for that, for guys to dig in a little deeper when they have to.”

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Manderscheid said he had few complaints in the first half, other than some expected season-opening jitters that resulted in too many first quarter turnovers .

With 6-foot-4 junior Issac Frazier solid in the middle and 6-foot-1 junior forward Brenden Landuyt hitting baseline jumpers, the Indians jumped out to a 23-13 halftime lead. They held the Spartans to but four points in the second quarter.

“We were executing pretty much the way we’d talked about,” Manderscheid said. “And they were playing hard without a lot of varsity experience.”

Landuyt, a smooth shooter, had 10 of his team-leading 13 points at the half.

The teams trade baskets in the third quarter, then Solon turned on the heat. Big junior Joe Weeks awoke and hit to quick jumpers to go with a steal and lay-up by Wentzien.

And the Indians fell apart.

Solon took the lead for good at 37-36 with a little over a minute to go.

With 27 seconds to go, Frazier took Marion’s only shot of the quarter and was fouled as he made a driving lay-up. He then missed the Indians’ only free throw attempt in the quarter.

“We did some nice things tonight, and overall I’m fairly happy with our execution,” Manderscheid said. “It was a nail-biter.

“I knew coming into the year, there’d be some bumps in the road. Well, this was one of them.”

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SOLON (41): Turner Wentzien 7 3-4 18, Rory Siddell 1 0-0 2, Joe Weeks 3 2-5 8, Jake Morris 0 0-0 0, Austin Miller 1 1-1 4, Todd Oberthein 1 0-0 2, Josh Koeppel 0 0-0 0, Ethan Ahern 1 2-3 4, Jaden Durr 0 0-0 0, Ryan Kunkel 1 1-2 3, Nolan Asprey 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 9-15 41.

MARION (38): Cale Cannoy 1 0-0 2, Tyler Gunderson 1 5-6 7, Brenden Landuyt 5 0-0 13, Jared Huhndorf 3 0-0 6, Isaac Frazier 4 0-1 8, Chayse Wheeler 0 0-0 0, Andrew Davis 1 0-0 2, Jake McDonald 0 0-0 0. Totals 15 5-7 38.

Halftime – Marion 23, Solon 13. 3-point goals – Solon 2 (Wentzien, Miller), Marion 3 (Landuyt 3) Total fouls – Solon 13, Marion 14. Fouled out – none.