

West Iron ends Westwood hex

Written by Peter Nocerini

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Tyler Stafford stretches as far as he can to keep the ball in play in West Iron's game against Westwood Dec. 3. Teammates Brock Hopkins (44) and Adam Newby (22) are nearby. IRON RIVER—It had been 18 long years since West Iron County defeated Westwood in boys basketball. That made its 64-54 win in the season opener Dec. 3 all the sweeter.

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"A nice way to start the season," observed Coach Dan Schive later.

The Wykons took charge with a 9-0 run in the second quarter and stayed in command after that, surviving a Patriots rally midway through the second half. It was the Wykons' only game last week.

Back/forth: The game was close and tight throughout the first quarter, with five lead changes. Westwood's Josh Richards hit two treys in the opening minutes, and the team had three.

Schive said he expected that early: "We wanted to be so aggressive with the ball that we were going to have a tougher time getting back" on defense.

He kept the speed up in the first quarter, using a man defense. "In the second, we started rotating around. They kind of got comfortable, because when we rotate, they have to think. When they started thinking, it got better."

Brain power: The Wykons hit their stride in the second quarter with a nine-point run fueled by Austin Waara's jumper from the top, Aren Newby's fast break, free throws and Adam Newby's bucket. By halftime, the Wykons led 30-21.

"We buckled down in the second quarter when their legs started to go on them," Schive said. "Then we really pinched down on defense." The coach said he liked how his players controlled their tempo, stepping it up at times, backing off at others.

WIC had built its lead to 14 late in the third quarter when Westwood attacked. Two baskets and three free throws closed the gap to 45-36 after three. The fourth quarter started with three quick baskets by Justin Luke. Suddenly, it's a one-possession game, 45-42.

Comeback turnback: Not for long, though. Adam Newby and Brock Hopkins converted passes inside, and Waara popped in one from the top. Later, Alex Ralston passed down low to Andy Ridolphi, part of a 15-5 Wykon rally that put the game out of reach.

Schive's analysis: "We started doing stupid stuff—forcing the drive, stupid fouls. But in the fourth quarter, when we got back to playing correctly, we were fine."

Ridolphi scored six in the fourth quarter, and both Adam Newby and Waara had five. For the game, Newby led with 18, Waara had 13, and Ridolphi had 11. Three other Wykons, Ralston, Tyler Stafford and Aren Newby, scored six each.

Stafford was a surprise. He hurt a knee late in football season, and Schive didn't expect him

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back until January. "The doctor gave him clearance," the coach said. "As long as he wears his knee brace and his pin stays, he's fine."

Gold stars: Both Newbys won praise for their play. Adam led WIC with 18 points and was steady all night. Aren came off the bench and did solid work.

West Iron made just one three-pointer and tried just a few. "But if you're getting eight-, 10-, 12-footers, why not take them? Eventually somebody's going to go zone on us, and then we'll stand and bomb away.

"As long as we get penetration and hit open guys and don't force stuff, we're OK."

Luke Woods led Westwood with 16 points, eight in the fourth quarter. Justin Luke had six of his nine in the fourth. (By the way, Westwood is Team Luke: Three players' first names are Luke, plus there's Justin Luke.)

Numbers: Team: WIC, 21-61 FGs (44%), 1-3 3's; 20 TOs (16 in 2nd half).

Wykon stats: Adam Newby, 18 pts; Austin Waara, 13 pts, 8 asts, 3 stls; Andy Ridolphi, 11 pts, 11 rebs; Alex Ralston, Tyler Stafford, Aren Newby, 6 points each; Brock Hopkins, 13 rebs; Stafford, 5 rebs. Westwood scoring: Luke Woods, 16 pts; Luke Duquette, 10 pts; Justin Luke, 9 pts; Luke Grey, 8 pts.

Patriots	17	4	15	18	--	54
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Wykons	19	11	15	19	--	64
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Coming up: The Wykons host Forest Park on Dec. 11 and then get six days to prepare for Houghton's visit Dec. 17.