CRYSTAL FALLS—After coming close at West Iron two nights earlier, Forest Park's boys basketball team earned its first win of the season at Rapid River Dec. 13, defeating the Rockets 53-40.

That makes the Trojans' record 1-2 overall and 1-1 in Skyline Conference play.

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After trailing by two after one quarter and leading by two at the half (26-24), the Trojans pulled away by outscoring the Rockets 27-16 in the second half

Hard work: The night before, in their only practice after losing to the Wykons, Coach Chris Nocerini worked his team hard on ball movement, patience and improved shot selection, which were all problems against WIC.

"The kids did a great job correcting them," he said. "It was the difference in the game. They just realized you can be patient on offense and take your time and still score points."

Rapid River, which reached the state semifinals in eight-man football this fall, has a lineup of big players--the Trojans were the smaller team.

Speed trap: But speed can beat size. The Rockets stayed in a tight zone most of the night and didn't come out on the speedier Trojans, "We just patiently moved the ball around," Nocerini said, "and it was our overall shot selection.

"The right guys were making the right shots. That's what we stressed in practice."

Austin Snell scored 10 of the Trojans' 12 points in the first quarter "Everybody was kind of cold, and Austin took us through that first quarter."

The rest of the team warmed up in the second quarter, and a key moment came late in the first half when a few Trojans got into "borderline foul trouble." Nocerini kept them on the floor and crossed his fingers.

Third reason: "I felt our team had the game in control," he explained later, "but I didn't want to go into the third quarter with these kids picking up a few cheap fouls.

"I needed them. I felt if we could pull away in the third quarter, we would be fine." The Trojans did just that, outdistancing the Rockets 17-9 to lead 43-33 after three.

Derek Aberly didn't start but scored a team-high 19 points, including all 10 Trojan points in the fourth quarter. "Most of those came at the free throw line—he did a great job being patient and waiting for his opportunities."

Snell finished with 15 points, including three triples, and Jeff Johnson scored 13, with two treys.

In practice, Forest Park has been working hard on shot selection and ball movement and on not getting called for fouls. Results in Rapid River were promising. "The next thing we've got to go after is our rebounding."

Numbers: Team stats: FP, 15-38 (39%) 2's; 5-10 (50%) 3's; 8-15 FTs; 18 fouls, 26 rebs. Rockets, 1x3, 11-19 free throws; 18 pts.

Player stats: Derek Aberly, 19 pts; Austin Snell, 15 pts, 3x3, 5 rebs; Jeff Johnson, 13 pts, 2x3, 5 stls; Raymond Tomasik, 4 pts, 6 rebs.

Trojans	12	14	17	10	--	53
Rockets	14	10	9	7	--	40

Coming up: The Trojans hosted Florence on Dec. 17. Now they get a 2 1/2-week break before their next game, which is at home Jan. 3 vs. Watersmeet.