

## Wykons rally past Calumet

Written by Peter Nocerini

Tuesday, February 12, 2013 5:02 PM -

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IRON RIVER—West Iron's boys basketball team spent much of last week deep in the woods with the snoozing bears, hibernating for a game and a half. \_\_\_PUBLIC\_\_\_

The alarm clock rang during the second half of the Calumet game Feb. 8, when they woke up and rallied from 12 points back to take a 53-50 win, outscoring the Copper Kings 18-6 in the fourth quarter, 9-0 in the final five minutes.

That triumph followed an 83-43 drubbing at Kingsford Feb. 5. West Iron is now 9-5 overall and 4-2 in the West Pac Conference.

Vs. Calumet: Despite a noisy winter homecoming crowd urging them on, West Iron struggled early. The first quarter was close, but the Wykons became a turnover machine in the second frame. WIC gave up the ball every way imaginable—even inbounds violations. Fifteen turnovers in the first half alone, many unforced.

Calumet made the most of it, going on a 9-1 run for a 28-20 halftime lead. A 6-0 Copper Kings burst early in the second half (three more WIC turnovers) gave them a 12-point lead, 36-24.

Austin Waara single-handedly kept West Iron in the game, hitting a three-pointer and four two-pointers—11 straight WIC points to end the third quarter. Two Waara free throws and another basket early in the fourth quarter made it 15 WIC points in a row from the senior guard.

Help arrives: Calumet still led by nine, 48-39, but reinforcements finally arrived. Waara passed to Adam Newby for a close-in bucket, and Ryan Rogers popped in a three, and the Wykons had now cut the lead to 48-44--within two possessions for the first time since the first half turnover epidemic. Calumet wanted time with 5:08 left.

Jacob Pieti's basket put the visitors ahead 50-44—but they never scored again. Brock Hopkins scored on a rebound. Waara hit another three to get West Iron within one, 50-49, with 3:30 left.

Three time-outs plus tons of action and dramatics passed in the next three minutes, but the score was still 50-49 with half a minute left.

The big play: Then the key moment: Waara dribbled down the right edge, drawing two defenders to him as Andy Ridolphi quietly moved just left of the basket. Waara passed, Ridolphi shot, and West Iron led for the first time since it was 3-2.

Calumet got two more chances to regain the lead, but both shots missed, Newby got the rebound, and Waara later added two free throws to close out the win.

Waara finished with 24 points—20 of WIC's 33 points in the second half. Newby had 10, and Joe Pisoni added seven. For Calumet, Paul Torala scored 21 and Chad Sturos had 15.

WIC's problems with turnovers so late in the season clearly vexed Coach Dan Schive. "We have to take better care of the ball," he said. "And we've got to do it in a hurry!"

Still, he praised the defense that shut down Calumet late in the game. "Kudos for them for keeping their heads in the game and making a run.

"We did enough to win. We don't play a lot of close games. But the two of them we played, we pulled out."

Schive was also grateful for the noisy student support. "That helps so much," he said. "They start screaming, the guys get excited, the other team starts getting frustrated. Huge!"

Numbers: WIC team: 21-47 (45%) FG, 3x3, 8-10 (80%) FT, 14 fouls. Calumet team: 1x3, 15-22 (68%) FT, 14 fouls.

WIC team: Austin Waara, 24 pts, 4 asts; Adam Newby, 10 pts, Joe Pisoni, 7 pts; Brock Hopkins, 8 rebs; Andy Ridolphi, 5 rebs; Ryan Rogers, 5 rebs; Tyler Stafford, 4 steals. Calumet stats: Paul Torala, 21 pts; Chad Sturos, 15 pts; Jake Pieti, 7 pts.

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C.Kings 10 18 16 6 -- 50

Wykons 9 11 15 18 -- 53

At Kingsford: The Flivvers, ranked fourth in the U.P.'s "Big Five," dominated all night, outgunning WIC 17-7 in the first quarter. They led 38-22 at halftime.

"My starters had five points at halftime," Schive said. "They were bigger than we were. He outcoached me, and they just flat outplayed us from the beginning.

"They're wide, and they set good screens."

Ridolphi led the Wykons with 11 points, Alex Ralston had eight. Kingsford's balanced attack featured four players scoring 17 or 16 points.

Numbers: WIC team: 3x3, 10-11 FT, 13 fouls. Kingsford team: 9 3's, 10-13 FT, 11 fouls.

WIC stats: Andy Ridolphi, 11 pts; Alex Ralston, 8 pts. Kingsford stats: Cole Michaud, 17 pts; Caleb Harrington, 16 pts, 2x3; Aiden Wienke, 16 pts; David Harrington, 16 pts, 4x3.

Wykons 7 15 9 12 -- 42

Flivvers 17 21 24 21 -- 83

Coming up: The Wykons visited District 95 rival Norway for a makeup game Feb. 11. They host Escanaba Feb. 12 and round out the three-game week when L'Anse visits Feb. 15.

On Feb. 19, they visit Iron Mountain for another make-up date with a D95 opponent.