

Argylls rout Alex for first-ever outright CIC title

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Madison-Grant's Grant Brown dives by Alexandria's Owen Harpe in the first half of the Argylls' 60-37 win Friday night. Brown scored 29 points to help M-G clinch the CIC championship. He also surpassed the 1,000-point mark for his career.

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ALEXANDRIA — Winning an outright conference championship is always a meaningful accomplishment, but it's something a Madison-Grant boys basketball had never done. At least until Friday night.

Fueled by a big second half from senior Grant Brown and stingy team defense, the Class 2A No. 10 Argylls earned a 60-37 win over Alexandria and finished their Central Indiana Conference schedule with a perfect, 7-0 record.

M-G boys' teams had shared the CIC championship five times since the school joined the league in 1969, but the 2020-21 Argylls are the first to have only their finger prints on the coveted conference hardware.

"I'm just really happy for the community. The community, our senior class, the administration, there are so many people that have poured into these kids other than me obviously," said M-G's first year coach Kevin Cherry. "I'm just happy for everybody.

“To complete this conference run without a loss is a pretty special accomplishment,” he continued. “You think about the players we’ve played and the coaches we’ve gone against, if you run the table in the CIC you’ve had a pretty successful year. I’m just really proud of all our guys. Grant getting his 1,000th point, really special.”

To make sure the Argylls' championship cake was properly iced, Brown scored 21 of his game-high 29 points in the second half, including the 1,000th of his career midway through the fourth quarter.

Brown, and the Argylls, started the night slowly on the offensive end. He was 3-of-12 and M-G hit just 7-of-21, in a low scoring first half.

However, Brown's sensational second half included an 8-of-8 shooting performance from the field and a 14-point third quarter that allowed M-G to seize total control.

“A lot of us, especially me in the first half, we just weren’t hitting shots,” Brown said.

“Recently I’ve been in a shooting slump and I just went into the locker room at halftime and fixed my mechanics mentally and gained that confidence.

“I went out in second half, drove in got layups to fall then just expanded out to the three. Got my confidence back and was able to hit those shots.”

Alexandria controlled the pace of play in the opening quarter while Madison-Grant struggled to find its shooting touch in a 2-of-11 performance from the field. The Tigers also limited the Argylls to just one shot and edged out to an 8-5 lead after one.

The slower pace remained to the home team’s liking for much of the second quarter as well, but the Argylls defense made it tough for the Tigers to find shots. Alexandria took just three shots and committed six turnovers in the quarter, but still led 12-10 after Jagger Orick’s bucket 4:30 before halftime.

Those would be Alexandria’s last points until early in the third quarter.

Lance Wilson’s 12-foot jumper tied the game at 12, then Kaden Howell, Brown and Jase Howell all scored a basket in the final 2:10 to send the Argylls to intermission with a 18-12 lead.

“With our offensive struggles and not hitting shots in that first quarter, our defense kept us in a position to still be ahead,” Cherry said. “Our defense was really good. We were locked in on our assignments, the scheme we came in wanting to implement. I thought we did that, really pretty flawlessly for 32 minutes.”

M-G's defense remained constant while its offense caught fire very quickly in the third quarter.

Brown started the scoring with a layup just 20 seconds in, then after Kole Stewart answered with a bucket for Alex, Brown hit consecutive 3-pointers. The Argylls forced two more turnovers that were converted into a bucket by Jase Howell and a pair of free throws for Brown.

In under four minutes, Madison-Grant's lead swelled to 30-14.

Alexandria made just 2-of-9 field goal attempts, had six more turnovers in the third, and M-G carried a 43-18 lead into the final eight minutes.

Brown's driving, left-handed finish with 4:13 remaining extended Madison-Grant's lead to 57-21 - the largest of the game - and moved him into the 1,000-point club. He joined teammate and classmate Kaden Howell, who reached the milestone in the Grant Four championship in late December.

"We grew up playing together and it's awesome, just the brotherhood and connection that me and Kaden have created over the years. How close we are," Brown said. "It's awesome that we've both accomplished that goal in the same year with each other."

Madison-Grant finished 23-of-45 (51%) from the field after a 16-of-24 (67%) performance in the second half. The Argylls made 2-of-10 from long range in the first two quarters, then hit 4-of-8 over the final two.

"That first quarter, it really started kinda how I thought it might. They wanted to control tempo and I begged our guys, let's don't settle for threes," Cherry said. "At halftime we talked about let's stop settling. It's more fun to score then go play defense than to get a quick shot and have to go guard for a minute-and-a-half."

Jase Howell finished with nine points for M-G, Kaden Howell added seven points on 3-of-5 shooting. Jackson Manwell scored five, Justin Moore had four points, Seth Lugar added three, Wilson finished with two and Chad Harbert scored one.

Orick led Alexandria with 10 points.

The Argylls limited the Tigers to a 13-of-34 (38%) shooting performance, but six of Alexandria's field goals came in the fourth quarter when M-G had the game well in hand. Alex also committed 19 turnovers.

"We knew on both sides of the ball we were going to have to work hard every play. We knew we were gonna be limited on possessions," Brown said. "We knew on defense we

had to execute and get stops, then go down on offense and execute on that end to score and get up and just go all out to stop them.”