

M-G overcomes Brown's 45 for CIC win over Blackford

- By SCOTT HUNT shunt@chronicle-tribune.com



Madison-Grant's Kaden Howell dips under Blackford's Luke Brown for two points in the second half of the Argylls' 71-67 win Wednesday in Fairmount.
Scott Hunt / shunt@chronicle-tribune.com

FAIRMOUNT — Containing Luke Brown has proven to be a difficult task for everyone through his four high school basketball seasons at Blackford.

It certainly was yet again Wednesday night at Madison-Grant, where Brown poured in 45 points in a dazzling array of long-distance shooting, but the Argylls were OK with it for the most part.

The game plan for M-G centered around defending Brown as best they could and trying to limit the other five Bruins that saw the floor from having good nights.

From that respect, it was mission accomplished for the Argylls.

Most importantly, though, M-G used a balanced offensive attack and flipped a six-point deficit with just over four minutes remaining with a 10-0 run that took less than two minutes.

The Class 2A No. 11 Argylls then held on down the stretch to earn a 71-67 win over the 2A No. 7 Bruins. M-G moved to 5-0 in the Central Indiana Conference and planted itself firmly in the driver's seat for the CIC title.

"I challenged our kids like, let's just see if we can go out and guard him," said Madison-Grant coach Kevin Cherry, noting his Argylls might see Brown again in the sectional that is just over a month away. "Let's don't try to get into let's gimmick them or stuff like that. Let's just go out and guard him and if (No.) 25

(Brown) gets 40, like he did, then maybe those other guys don't go off too and we can still win the basketball game. That's exactly what happened.

"He made some tough shots that were deep on the floor. When he gets a little rhythm dribble and gets it off the bounce, he's tough to guard," Cherry continued. "... As a team I thought we did a good job of knowing where he was. He got 10 more than his average, but I'll trade him his 10 for our win."

Four other Bruins combined to score 22 points. While Brown made 15-of-28 field goal attempts, 11-of-21 from 3-point range, his teammates were 8-of-24 overall and 4-of-11 from deep.

Madison-Grant's Grant Brown took the assignment of guarding Luke Brown for much of the game, while Kaden Howell and Jase Howell each took some turns trying to slow him down as well.

"We knew Luke was going to come in here and get his," Grant Brown said. "We were focused on those other guys, shutting them down, letting him get his and contain them. We just came out with energy. Our goal was to come out here and compete and win together."

Ultimately, Madison-Grant's balance and efficiency on offense, along with a 31-24 rebounding advantage, led to the win.

The Argylls shot 55 percent (27-of-49) from the field, made 7-of-14 from 3-point range and 10-of-12 free throws. M-G only surrendered three offensive rebounds to the Bruins.

Grant Brown and Justin Moore each scored 17 points. Jackson Manwell finished with 16 and Kaden Howell had 15. Jase Howell scored all six of his points in the second half.

Grant Brown also handed out 13 assists out of M-G's 22 assists, and Moore collected 14 rebounds.

Kaden Howell, Manwell and Moore scored six points apiece in the first quarter as M-G outscored Blackford, 20-16, with all the Bruins' points coming from Luke Brown.

Blackford tied the game at 25 and 27 before an 8-0 run by the Argylls eventually led to a 37-32 lead for M-G at halftime. Manwell scored 14 points in the first half and hit 4-of-5 shots from 3-point range. Luke Brown had 27 points at intermission.

Madison-Grant led for the first five minutes of the third quarter before a 13-2 run led to Blackford's first lead of the game at 44-43. Luke Brown hit a 3-pointer to extend the Bruins' lead to four before Manwell

and Kaden Howell accounted for the final four points of the quarter and tied the game at 47 entering the final eight minutes.

Grant Brown made a 3-pointer and Moore converted a 3-point play in the first minute of the fourth quarter to give M-G a six-point advantage, but Luke Brown hit a trio of triples and scored 11 points in a 14-2 run for Blackford that had the Bruins leading 61-55 with 4:20 remaining.

"Coming into the game we knew it was going to be a game of runs. If they go on a run we've got to be able to withstand it and fight back against it," said Kaden Howell. "That's what happened in the fourth quarter. They went on probably their biggest run of the game and it was just we've got to respond.

"That was the mindset, we've got to respond, hold them to as little as possible during that run, then respond. That's exactly what we did."

Moore's bucket started the 10-0 run and was followed by deuces from Grant Brown, Kaden Howell then Jase Howell. Grant Brown capped the run by making both ends of a one-and-one to give M-G a 65-61 lead with 2:05 to play.

Maxwell Wors' field goal trimmed the M-G lead to two, but Grant Brown made two more free throws with 51 seconds left to keep the Argylls up 67-63.

After a pair of free throws by Jackson Wors again cut the M-G lead to two, Jase Howell calmly sank two free throws with 22.2 seconds remaining that made it 69-65.

Luke Brown scored Blackford's final points with 12 seconds to go, but following a timeout, the Argylls executed an inbound play to perfection to clinch the win.

Grant Brown took the ball out under Blackford's basket. Kaden Howell moved like he was prepared to set a screen, but took off to the opposite end of the floor. Brown delivered a long strike to the streaking Howell who converted the layup and sealed the win.

"We drew that play up knowing if they came out and lined up in a certain way, we were going to run it. If not, we had a different play drawn up," Kaden Howell said. "They came out and lined up exactly how we thought they would so we ran it and it got me a wide-open layup. I'll take it."

"We knew they were going to be heavy pressuring us trying to keep it on this side of the court," Grant Brown said. "As soon as I had a guy line up on me, that was our intention, to run that exact play. Once I

had a guy on me, we knew a full-court pass was going to be there for a layup so we just threw it and sealed the game.”

Though Madison-Grant (12-2) is in control of its CIC destiny, the Argylls still have work to do to clinch the title.

It starts Friday at Oak Hill, where a win would clinch at least a share. The Argylls finish their CIC schedule at Alexandria on Feb. 12.

Coming off such an emotional win to face a Grant County and CIC rival less than 48 hours later isn't the easiest of scenarios for the Argylls, but Cherry believes his team will be ready when they get to Oak Hill.

“What we talked about just briefly there in the locker room (post game) was the word validate,” Cherry said. “We did something tonight because we won a home conference game. Our goal is be in a spot to win a conference and to do that I think you have to win your home, conference basketball games. That's what we expect and we did that tonight.

“We want to validate. We want to play to a standard and not be so wrapped up in the wins and losses. So if we play to a standard at Oak Hill and do happen to get beat, then we can live with that.”