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Sports

BEARCAT CLASSIC: Free Throws Lift Vikings Past Chiefs

By KEVIN FIORENZO/Index-Journal sports writer

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Emerald High School boys basketball coach Robin Scott has been working throughout the early part of the season trying to get the Vikings to improve at the free-throw line. For one night at least, that progress finally showed.

Emerald went 6-for-8 from the free-throw line in overtime of its first round Bearcat Classic game against McCormick on Friday to emerge with a 66-56 victory at Lander's Finis Horne Arena. The victory sets up a semifinal at 8:30 tonight against Abbeville, which won earlier in the day against Saluda.

McCormick freshman guard Torrance Bryant made his fifth 3-pointer of the game with 2.8 seconds left in regulation to send the game to overtime, but Emerald outscored the Chiefs 12-2 in the extra period. "Free throws are just so important and ... we're getting better at them that's the main thing," Scott said. "(McCormick) hit the big shot and then we came out in overtime, didn't come out flat. "I just told them it's like the first quarter, you got to try to get that momentum quick."

Emerald had taken a 34-27 lead to open the second half and led by four with 46 seconds left on the clock, but Marteze Robinson made a layup with 38.9 seconds left to pull McCormick within two. Emerald's A.J. Jones made one of two free throws to put the Vikings up by three before Bryant's game-tying shot.

The Viking successfully made the majority of their free throws late in the game and Chiefs coach Ben Touchberry said after the game that with the youth on his team, they're still learning how to play pressure defense. "We just got to start learning how to guard the ball without fouling," Touchberry said. "We've got to do a better job of blocking out, especially against a team like Emerald that's real physical."

As they have against most opponents this season, the Vikings dominated McCormick in the paint, particularly in pulling down offensive rebounds.

The biggest moment in that respect came with 1:38 left in the fourth quarter when Antonio Gray, who had 11 points, scored a second-chance layup to put Emerald ahead 51-49. "We've rebounded pretty well all year, but we got outrebounded the other day against Mid-Carolina and I hope our guys are taking that kind of stuff personally," Scott said. "We're glad to be able to come away with a win. Don't know how glad we are to have to play Abbeville as good as they are, but we'll tee it up (today) and see what happens."

MCCORMICK (56)

Brandyn New 3, Marteze Robinson 16, Torrance Bryant 17, Demarcus Barr 4, Randarious London 4, Chavez Adams 4, Reggie Garrett 2, Terrence Bryant 2.

EMERALD (66)

Antonio Gray 11, Austin Baten 6, Lucas Mathis 4, Rahmad Strong 12, A.J. Jones 4, Dee Parks 12, Ryan Tracy 11, Ontario Curry 2.

McCormick 8 17 12 17 2 ♦ 56

Emerald 11 14 16 13 12 ♦ 66

3-point goals ♦ McCormick 6 (To. Bryant 5, New 1), Emerald 3 (Tracy 3). Fouled out ♦

None. Technicals ♦ None.

Records: M (2-4 overall); E (4-3).