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Sports

Gray Lifts Emerald To Victory

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Antonio Gray spent much of the first half of the Emerald High School boys basketball team's senior night Tuesday riding the bench, but he made up for lost time in the final 16 minutes. Gray scored six straight points over the final three minutes of the Vikings' Region 1-AA game against Crescent and the Vikings came away with a 60-56 victory over the Tigers at Westview Middle School. The Vikings (9-12 overall, 2-5 region) managed to keep their slim playoff hopes alive by winning Tuesday with three regular season games left on the schedule.

Crescent committed turnovers on three straight possessions over the final three minutes of regulation and Gray scored off all of them, culminating with a three-point play with 1:23 remaining to put Emerald ahead 57-52. Gray scored all 13 of his points in the final two periods and went 6-for-6 from the free-throw line during that stretch. "I just wanted to play because I'd been sitting on the bench for so long," Gray said. "I just wanted to get in and help my team, that's all."

Emerald played a triangle-and-two zone defense on Crescent through much of the second half with little success, but switched to man-to-man late, which led to the Tigers' increase in turnovers. "We switched to straight man at the end and it took them a little while to get into an offensive set," Emerald coach Robin Scott said. "But really, it's just people stepping up and making plays. That's something we haven't had, but we've had the last two home games."

The Vikings' increase in defensive pressure late made up for their lax performance through the early stages of the half. Leading by six at halftime, Emerald scored the first two buckets of the third period before suffering some breakdowns on Crescent's end. The Tigers went on a 17-4 run through the rest of the quarter and entered the fourth quarter with a 41-38 lead. "We'd been pressing the whole the game and the

one thing that does is it wears on you," Crescent coach Ed Fry said. "We were starting to get effects from our press and being able to score in the open court."

Crescent led for most of the final period until it was called for traveling with 2:57 left ahead 52-50. Gray was fouled on the next possession and he made both free throws to tie the game. "All of them are streaky, so you're always waiting for somebody else to step up," Scott said. "So many of them can do it, it's just a question of who it's going to be."

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