

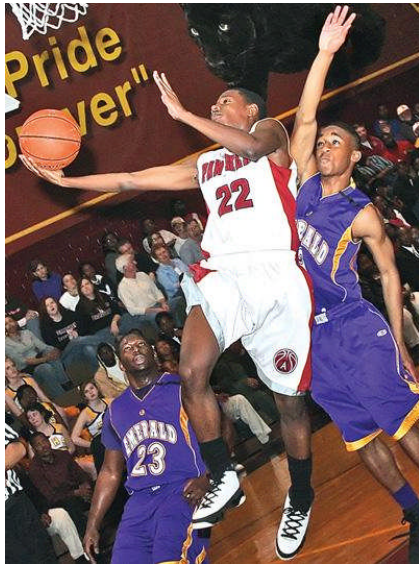
THE INDEX-JOURNAL

Sports

Panthers Limit Emerald To Seven Second-Quarter Points In Win

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Published: Wednesday, February 11, 2009 12:03 AM EST



ABBEVILLE -- Beating the Region 1-AA champion Abbeville High School basketball team would be a tall task for many teams at their best, but scoring just seven points in a period makes it nearly impossible. The Panthers' defense limited Emerald to that total in the second quarter Tuesday and faced little opposition in a 63-48 victory over the Vikings. Having already clinched the region title Friday, Abbeville has little to accomplish Thursday in its regular season finale aside from preparing for the start of the Class AA playoffs next week. "We're very fortunate to have had the year we've had, to stay healthy and the kids are really starting to come together," Abbeville coach John-Mark Scruggs said. "We feel good going into the playoffs."

In contrast, the Vikings need to win Thursday at Walhalla to remain in playoff contention. Emerald started out Tuesday's game well, trailing by just two after the first quarter, but the Panthers adjusted their defense and outscored the Vikings 19-7 in the second quarter to take a 34-20 lead into halftime. "We just went straight up man (defense)," Scruggs said. "We've been working on some different defenses, but going to man seemed to really work for us."

Emerald coach Robin Scott said the Panthers' defensive sets weren't what made them so

Abbeville's Hakeem Power (22) drives to the basket for a layup Tuesday against Emerald defenders. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

difficult to face on that end. "It's not that they do all that much defensively, it's just that

they're so quick defensively," Scott said. "It puts a lot of pressure on the guards and then you take it to the basket hard and you don't get the shot you're used to making. They did a good job on the boards."

For the game, the Vikings didn't score more than 15 points in a quarter. "We started out pretty good with their pressure," Scott said. "We turned it over a few times, but we ran into this spell where I think for seven minutes we scored like three points. You can't do that against the best team in the region."

Emerald trailed for the duration of Tuesday's game, but Ryan Tracy pulled the Vikings within 11 when he hit a jumper with a few seconds on the clock in the third period. Abbeville pulled away two minutes into the fourth quarter when Quay Watt, who scored a team-high 15 points, made one of two free throws. After missing the second one, he got the rebound and made a layup as he was fouled, putting the Panthers ahead 49-34. "Sometimes you have to win ugly and that's the way it was tonight," Scruggs said. "I was proud of our intensity. In the second quarter I thought we did a really good job."