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Sports

Vikings Rally To Top Walhalla

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Down the stretch of its game against Walhalla High School on Tuesday, Emerald's boys basketball team appeared on course for its eighth straight loss, but that all changed during the final 1:30. Trailing by two, the Vikings closed on a 10-0 run thanks to five turnovers by the Razorbacks in a span of seconds, and Emerald came away with a 67-59 Region 1-AA victory. "I believe that's a turnaround for this season," A. J. Jones said. "We've lost a lot of games, but we're still hungry for a win."

The win gave Emerald its first region victory and snapped a seven-game losing streak that dated back to December. "It was the longest losing streak that I think Emerald's ever had," Emerald coach Robin Scott said. "It's like I told them, 'You just starting winning some games and we'll see where we go from there.' It's not a question of where we're going to be after tonight's game, it's just a matter of we've got to win for our own well-being mentally."

Emerald appeared on course for another loss when Walhalla went up by three with 1:40 on the clock, but the Vikings got a steal and Rahmad Strong hit an open 3-pointer to tie the game. The two teams each scored once more to tie at 59 before Walhalla committed four more turnovers in less than a minute, and Emerald converted on each one to move ahead by eight, sealing the win. "Once we got down, we had to go straight man-to-man instead of our combo," Scott said. "We just got out of that combo and basically made a few plays, which in the games before that we've all been close with, we haven't made plays at the end." "Hopefully, we've turned the corner."

The Vikings didn't have to do too much to get turnovers in the final stretch as Walhalla appeared rushed and threw the ball away. "We didn't value a possession all night long," Walhalla Hal Dunlap said. "We didn't work hard enough to get open and then we're careless once we had it; just turnovers throughout the whole thing."

Ontario Curry led the Vikings with 13 points, while Dee Parks and Antonio Gray each had 12. Strong added 11.

Emerald entered halftime with a two-point lead and led for most of the second half, but Walhalla stepped up its defense in the fourth quarter. Having faced zone defenses through much of its region schedule, Emerald was temporarily thrown off by the Razorbacks' man-to-man pressure. "They went to straight man with about four minutes to go, and other than us getting maybe a layup or two off a fastbreak, we were just playing against zone so long that there was no semblance of offense," Scott said.

WALHALLA (59): Meeshon Thompson 12, Grayson Grant 3, Nathan Williamson 7, Brent Arnold 10, Isaac Williamson 10, Hunter Coker 15.

EMERALD (67): Rahmad Strong 11, A. J. Jones 9, Jared Norman 2, Ryan Tracy 2, Lucas Mathis 2, Dee Parks 12, Ontario Curry 13, Antonio Gray 12, Austin Baten 2.

Walhalla 12 13 16 18 - 59
Emerald 15 12 16 24 - 67

3-point goals – Walhalla 2 (Grant 1, N. Williamson 1); Emerald 1 (Strong 1); Fouled out -- None. Technical fouls – None.

Records: W (12-6 overall, 2-3 Region 1-AA); E (8-11, 1-4).

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