

Vikes end Marion dominance

Huntington North breaks winless postseason history against the Giants

By PAUL SIEGFRIED
Sports Editor

For more than a generation, Huntington's been waiting for this.

That's why the people were there an hour before the game. The young had heard the stories for as long as they could remember and were ready to make their own history. The old had lived it, and had come back once more, hoping this would be the time it would actually happen.

And when, after 11 previous disappointments, Huntington North finally beat Marion in the boys' basketball tournament, that generation of frustration was set free onto the floor of a packed North Arena.

Huntington North's 72-59 win over eighth-ranked Marion in Thursday's Class 4A Sectional 7 semifinal marked the first win in school history over the Giants in postseason play, and was the first tournament win by any Huntington team over Marion since 1963.

"I can't even explain my feeling right now. This is awesome," said HNHS senior Rick Hall. "It's exciting beating Marion, but like I told the guys, we've got to keep our excitement in because we've got one more game."

HNHS coach Eric Foister didn't play up the Vikings' postseason record against the Giants, but did remind them of it before the game.

"I don't get caught up in that much. I did put '0-11' up on the board. They didn't know what it was. I told 'em and it's like, 'oh yeah,'" said Foister. "I think it was an issue for ev-

eryone but our kids. Everybody wants to beat Marion, I don't care who you are. More importantly, I challenged them after they lost in the conference championship. I told they hadn't achieved anything. We've had a lot of accomplishments, and the crowd is proof of that, but we haven't achieved anything. Even beating Marion, we haven't achieved anything. We haven't won the sectional. That's what I want the guys to understand."

Huntington North (18-5) will face Fort Wayne Wayne in Friday's sectional championship game at North Arena beginning at 7:30 p.m. The Generals defeated Homestead 66-48 in Thursday's second semifinal.

The Vikes were led by Sean Kline, who scored 15 of his game-high 22 points in the second half, with nine coming in the fourth period. The 6-7 sophomore had gotten Huntington North off to a quick start with seven first-quarter points, but picked up two fouls in the opening period and sat out the next nine minutes, including the entire second period.



Hall added 16 points and sparked the Vikings in the fourth period, while Phil Bailey added 10 points, including six of Huntington's first nine points of the game. Dusty Ransom came off the bench to also score 10.

The Vikings used a near-perfect fourth quarter to get their first-ever tourney win over the Giants, but it would take a few minutes for that perfection to kick in.

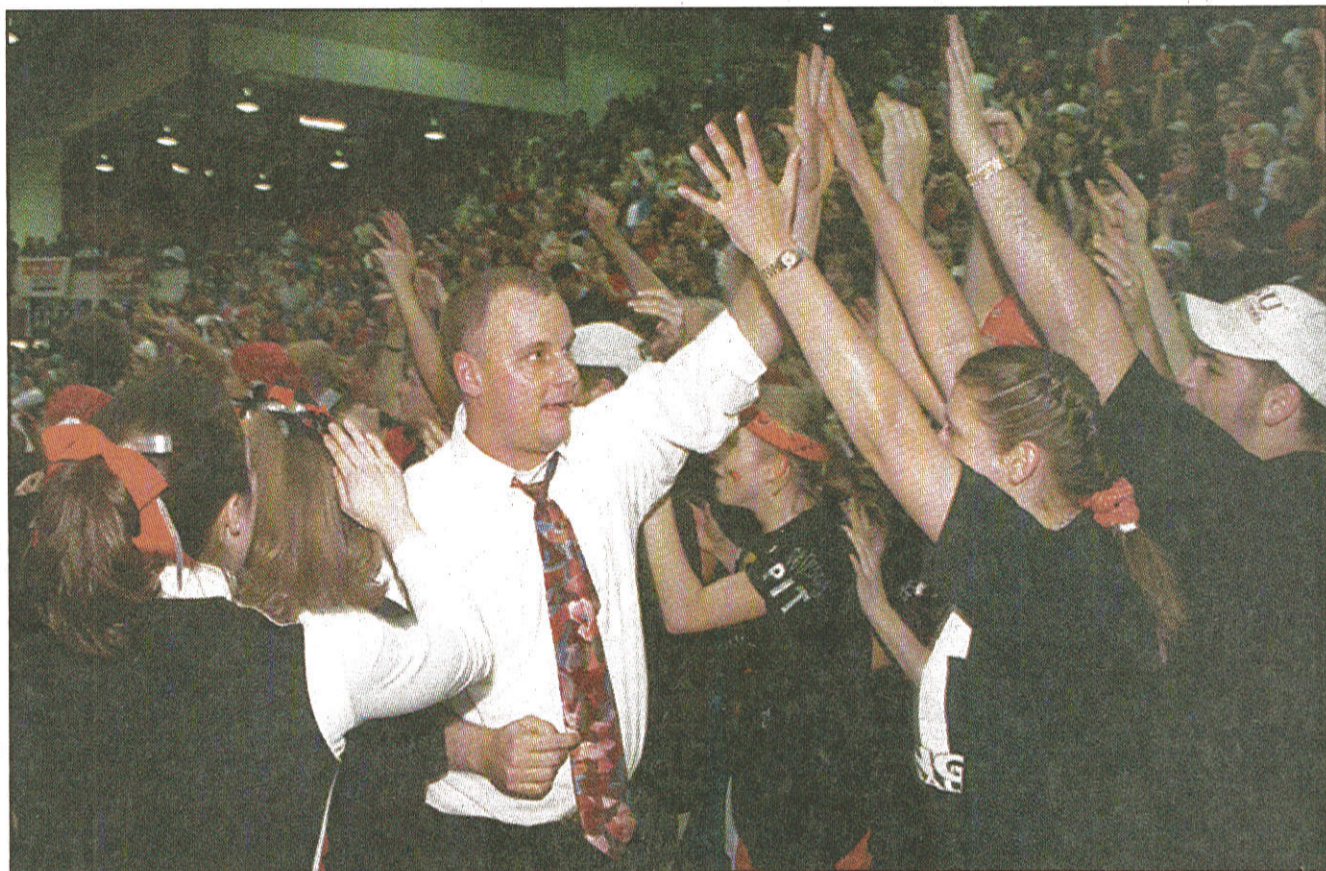
Trailing 48-43 entering the final period, Marion rallied on back-to-back three-pointers from Todd Chin and Josh Peters to close the gap to one at 50-49. Following a Viking turnover, Chin found Allen Miller for a layup to put the Giants ahead by a point, and another Huntington miscue gave the ball back to the Giants, who had gained the momentum in the contest.

But the Vikings forced a five-second closely-guarded call on Marion's next possession, and when Ransom found Kline open under the basket for an easy score, Huntington North regained the lead, this time for good.

A miss by Marion's Reggie Nevels turned into a fast-break basket for the Vikes on the other end, a behind-

VIKINGS 72				GIANTS 59			
							
HUNTINGTON NORTH				MARION			
Kline	7-11	8-9	22	McClung	0-0	2-2	2
Hall	4-11	8-8	16	Chin	5-14	4-5	15
Cotton	3-4	0-0	6	Nevels	2-5	0-0	4
Bailey	3-3	2-4	10	Halverson	3-6	0-0	7
Glasgow	0-0	0-0	0	Backs	6-8	1-3	13
Mitchell	0-1	1-2	1	Miller	2-3	0-0	4
Miller	2-6	1-2	5	Peters	3-6	1-1	9
Ransom	3-6	4-6	10	Dailey	1-3	0-0	3
Thompson	0-0	0-0	0	Acord	0-0	0-0	0
Burris	0-0	2-2	2	Cates	1-1	0-0	2
Blackburn	0-0	0-0	0	Rans	0-0	0-0	0
Totals	22-42	26-33	72	Totals	23-46	8-11	59
Marion	13	19	11	16	59		
Huntington North	15	15	18	24	72		

Three-point shooting — Marion 5-13 (Chin 1-4, Halverson 1-4, Peters 2-2, Dailey 1-3), Huntington North 2-6 (Hall 0-4, Bailey 2-2). Total fouls — Marion 23, Huntington North 14. Fouled out — Backs. Rebounds — Marion 17 (Backs 9), Huntington North 30 (Kline 9). Turnovers — Marion 14, Huntington North 10.



Herald-Press photos by Chris Henderson

Huntington North coach Eric Foister (above, center) gets high fives from the student section "The Pit" after the Vikings beat No. 8 Marion 72-59 in Thursday's sectional semifinal at North Arena. Right, Huntington North's Rick Hall (20) drives past the Giants' Matt Backs.

the-back pass from Hall to Kline for a layup. Chin would hit a shot for the Giants, but the Vikes were on a roll. Ransom put the ball on the floor and scored, then following a Chin miss, Hall grabbed the rebounds and went coast-to-coast for a layup to put the Vikes up 58-53.

Kline picked up his fourth foul while chasing a loose ball with 2:19 left, but just a few seconds later Kline would again make the play of the game.

Ransom blocked a Marion shot, and the loose ball was grabbed by Joel Cotton, who fired the ball to Kline, who was near mid-court, with only Chin between him and the basket. Kline and Chin ran side-by-side toward the Viking goal, but Kline was able to get a step ahead and went up for the two-hand dunk. Kline also was fouled by Chin on the play and completed the three-point play to put the Vikes up 61-53 with just under two minutes left.

From there, the Vikings made a steady march to the free-throw line, while Marion misfired from the field and was forced to foul. Huntington North made 10-of-13 free throws in the fourth quarter and 26-of-33 in the game, including a combined 16-of-17 from Kline and Hall. The Vikes also made all seven of their shots from the field in the fourth quarter.

Kline, who also had a momentum-turning dunk in a win Tuesday over Fort Wayne South Side, said Huntington's fourth-quarter was more than just his one play.

"It's always good to have a big emotional play like (the dunk), but also too, we finished our free throws down the stretch and that's what you've got to do," he said. "Finally we got some pressure on them. We stopped gambling as much and started rebounding and playing defense and got the tempo how we wanted it."

Hall said the Vikings wanted to get out and run.

"It seems like we get into a rhythm in the fourth quarter. When we get like that, we're a tough team to stop," he said.

Marion coach Moe Smedley said the five-second call was the turning point for his team, which included a freshman, sophomore and junior in the backcourt.

"Momentum is huge when you've got two good teams playing each other. (The turnover) deflated us a little bit and sparked them a little bit. We got behind and didn't take care of it. Maybe to my young, inexperienced team, a call like that is more devastating to a young team than it is to an older team. But our inexperience showed late," said Smedley.



The Vikings got out to a quick start behind Bailey, who hit a pair of three-pointers in the first period to get the Vikes out to a 15-8 lead. But Marion came back to get within 15-13 at the end of the first quarter, and with Kline out of the lineup with two fouls, the Giants took their first lead at 17-16 on a Backs turnaround with 6:40 left in the first half.

Marion pushed the lead up to five at 29-24 before the (Turn to Page 2B, Col. 1)

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Vikes beat Marion

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Vikings closed late in the half, Hall fit two free throws, and Kyle Miller scored when he stayed after one of his own misses to get a tip-in. Cotton finished off the half by putting back a miss of his own at the buzzer and getting Huntington North to within 32-30.

Kline picked up his third foul just 22 seconds into the third period, but stayed in the game, and his two free throws with 5:25 left in the period gave the lead back to the Vikes at 36-34.

Marion came back to take a 38-36 edge, but Huntington North closed out the third quarter with a 9-0 run, led by Hall, who beat the Marion press for four points, and created another score with a behind-the-back pass to Ransom for a score.

Chin finished with 15 points to lead Marion, which ends the year at 17-5. Matt Backs added 13 points.

FW Wayne 66, Homestead 48

The Generals limited the Spartans to just four third-period field goals and outscored Homestead 22-9 in the quarter to take charge.

Mike Rutledge scored 22 points to lead Wayne (14-6), which trailed 13-9 after the first quarter, but rallied to take a 25-22 lead by halftime.

Mike Rhinehart led Homestead

(12-9) with 12 points and Ryan Morris added 10.

NOTES — Of Huntington's 11 tournament losses to the Giants, the last 10 had come at Marion's gym. The other loss came in the 1969 semistate at Fort Wayne. The Vikings had never met the Giants in the postseason at North Arena. Marion leads the all-time series 38-7, with all seven of Huntington North's wins coming at home ... The fathers of both Hall and Kline played on Huntington North teams that lost to Marion in tournament play. Mike Hall played for Huntington North from 1969-71, while John Kline played from 1976-77 ... Huntington North lost to Wayne during the regular season, 68-65 in overtime at Fort Wayne on Jan. 16.

CLASS 4A SECTIONAL 7

Semifinal

FW WAYNE 66, HOMESTEAD 48

Thursday

at North Arena

FW WAYNE (66)

Pirtle 1 0-0 2, Corley 3 1-2 7, Martin 3 3-4 9, Govan 3 0-0 6, Rutledge 11 0-0 22, Hogue 1 6-7 9, Giant 0 0-0 0, Hill 3 0-0 6, Davis 0 0-0 0, Wallace 0 0-0 0, Wyss 0 0-0 0, Meyers 2 1-3 5. Totals 27 11-16 66.

HOMESTEAD (48)

Lohman 2 2-2 7, Moyer 1 4-4 6, Morris 5 0-0 10, Rhinehart 6 0-2 12, Cleaver 1 0-0 2, Ankenbruck 2 2-2 8, Olson 1 0-0 3, Prosser 0 0-0 0, Muff 0 0-0 0, Antonios 0 0-0 0, Barr 0 0-0 0, Atwood 0 0-0 0. Totals 18 8-10 48.

FW Wayne	9	16	22	19	— 66
Homestead	13	10	9	16	— 48

Three-point goals — Ankenbruck 2, Lohman, Olson, Hogue. Total fouls — FW Wayne 15, Homestead 17. Fouled out — none.