

Boys Basketball: Strong send half sends Nevis back to state Class A tournament

The Tigers outscored Barnum 37-12 after the intermission in a 67-37 victory in the Section 5A championship game.



Members of the Nevis boys basketball team posed with their medals and trophy after defeating Barnum 67-37 in the Section 5A championship game at Foley on Friday, March 18, 2022.

Contributed / Scott Kramer

By Vance Carlson

March 18, 2022 08:58 PM

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FOLEY – Despite having an offense that averaged 74.7 points a game, including six games of scoring at least 90 points with two games over the century mark, Nevis head coach Scott Kramer said the key to repeating as the Section 5A boys basketball champions would be decided on the defensive end.

After a competitive first half, the Tigers executed on both ends of the court to take control as a balanced scoring attack and a solid defensive effort after the intermission led to a 67-37 victory over Barnum in the Section 5A championship game at Foley on Friday, March 18.

"We knew coming in that we were the better team offensively and that Barnum would need to put the fight to us. You have to give them credit because they played about as hard as a team can," said Kramer, whose team won the Section 5A title for the third year in a row. "It was a great feeling to get through the section and come out on top. As the favorite, there is a lot more pressure than most people understand, but our kids just got it going and rode some momentum from the Browerville game."

Nevis, the No. 1 seed in the West that was coming off a 79-53 win over Browerville-Eagle Valley, led 30-25 at the half when a 3-pointer by Hayden Charboneau cut the gap to 31-28 with 15:06 to play. That's when the Tigers went on a 24-4 run over the next nine minutes to take charge.

Barnum's early foul trouble resulted in 11 free throw attempts for the Tigers, who made 10 of them to claim a 48-29 lead at the 11:09 mark. A layup and three-point play by JohnPaul Benson along with a 3-pointer by Eddie Kramer also aided the 17-1 run. A layup by JJ Stevens with 9:20 to play ended a span of 5:46 without a field goal for Barnum to make it 50-32. Another layup by Benson and another 3-pointer by Kramer pushed the lead to 55-32.

After a layup by Evan Gustafson, the Tigers sealed the win with a 12-1 run on layups by Joe Houchin and Austin Ahrendt, a 3-pointer by Kramer, and a jumper by Ian Ahrendt. That made it 67-35 before Layne Wickstrom's jumper concluded the scoring.



Devan Lindow dished out four assists in Nevis' 67-37 win over Barnum in the Section 5A championship game on Friday, March 18, 2022.

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"Once we settled in and got some better looks and forced them to foul, we were able to take a lead into half," said Kramer. "Our depth showed its hand early in the second as we made the first run and then the floodgates opened."

This section title game was close in the first half as both teams held leads.

Gustafson's layup gave Barnum a 2-1 lead before the Tigers responded with a 9-2 run. A jumper by Benson, a layup by Cain Mitchell and a 3-pointer by Kramer sparked that run as Nevis led 10-4 with 13:35 to play in the first half. Layups by Joe Peterson, Matthew Berry and Wickstrom cut the deficit to 12-11 at the 10:58 mark.

Three layups by Berry and a jumper by Max Moors gave the Bombers a 20-17 lead with 6:51 left. Mitchell and Ty Warrington had layups for the Tigers during that stretch. Charboneau hit a 3-pointer as Barnum led 23-19 with 6:06 left. Nevis went on a 9-0 run, sparked by a three-point play by Benson and layups by Austin Ahrendt, Warrington and Benson for a 28-23 advantage. Peterson scored off a rebound, but a layup by Houchin gave the Tigers a 30-25 edge at the break.

Nevis' defense held the Bombers to only 12 points in the second half to send the Tigers to the state Class A quarterfinals.

Benson (16), Kramer (14) and Ty Warrington (12) led a balanced scoring attack for the Tigers, who will advance to the state Class A tournament with a 27-3 record. Nevis made 21 of 29 free throws, including 12 of 16 in the second half. Mitchell's six rebounds and two steals, Kramer's five rebounds and four assists, Warrington's four assists and four steals, Devan Lindow's four assists, Benson's three rebounds, and Houchin's two assists also sparked the win.

Barnum, the No. 1 seed in the East, ended the season with a 21-9 record. Berry (9) and Charboneau (6) combined for 15 points for the Bombers, who went 5 for 16 on free throws.

"We were able to withstand what we knew would be a furious start to the game as Barnum was a smaller team that spreads the floor. I thought we withstood their first run, but they were beating us to loose balls and we had a couple of careless turnovers that kept them in it," said Kramer. "Our main adjustment at half was to spread the floor a little more so that they couldn't cheat off, and it worked as they couldn't cover everyone. The balance in our scoring has been huge for us because it forces teams to pick their poison and we have seen that play out through this section tourney. Even though it was a 5-point game at half, our depth and defense wore them out and as we started the second half, we blew it open as Barnum had no answer for our balanced scoring as we coasted to the win."

BARNUM: Gustafson 2 1-7 5, Stevens 1 0-1 2, Peterson 2 1-2 5, Charboneau 2 0-0 6, Berry 4 1-2 9, Richardson 1 1-2 3, Wickstrom 2 1-2 5, Moors 1 0-0 2.
Totals: 15 (FG), 5 for 16 (FT).

NEVIS: Warrington 2 8-11 12, A. Ahrendt 3 1-2 7, Kramer 4 2-2 14, Mitchell 2 4-4 8, Benson 6 4-6 16, D. Lindow 0 0-1 0, Houchin 3 2-3 8, I. Ahrendt 1 0-0 2.
Totals: 21 (FG), 21 for 29 (FT).

Halftime: Nevis 30, Barnum 25. Three-pointers: Charboneau 2, Kramer 4. Team fouls: Barnum 19, Nevis 12.

Ready for state tournament

MINNEAPOLIS – The Tigers received the No. 4 seed for the state tournament and will open play at The Barn at Williams Arena on the campus of the University of Minnesota by facing Cherry at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, March 23.

Nevis defeated Cherry 67-45 on Jan. 18. However, Cherry enters state with a 26-4 record and a 12-game winning streak. The Tigers have won 19 of their last 20 games.

In the other state quarterfinals, defending champion and No. 1-seeded Hayfield (29-2) plays Russell-Tyler-Ruthton (23-7), No. 2 Belgrade-Broton-Elrosa (26-4) meets Sleepy Eye St. Mary's (28-2) and No. 3 New Life Academy (26-3) faces East Grand Forks Sacred Heart (28-3).

The consolation semifinals will be played on Thursday, March 24, at Concordia-St. Paul while the championship semifinals will be held at Williams Arena on Friday, March 25. The Class A championship, third-place and consolation championship games will be played on Saturday, March 26.

The Tigers have waited for the chance to play at Williams Arena as that trip was denied the last two seasons when COVID canceled the state tournament in 2020 and Nevis lost to Hancock 57-50 in a state quarterfinal game at Perham last season.

“Our seniors are more deserving of this than anyone. Going to state means playing at The Barn and our kids did everything they had to the last two years and were denied the opportunity to play there. It is especially gratifying for me as a dad, because Eddie and his teammates have dreamed of playing there since grade school,” said Kramer, who has led the Tigers to five section titles in the last eight seasons. “We are so excited to get to The Barn, but also realize that if we play well, that we have a chance to advance.”

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