

# MELHS has hot hand in Thanksgiving Tourney win; Oilers' Blake Marks explodes for 32 points

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
November 24 2015 4:30 PM



**EDWARDSVILLE** – **Metro East Lutheran** got off to a good start Monday night in the 35<sup>th</sup> edition of their **Thanksgiving Turkey Tipoff Classic** tournament, the Knights storming out to a 35-11 lead at halftime and going on to defeat Valmeyer 63-34 to close out Monday night's opening session.

Still, Knight coach Anthony Smith saw room for improvement.

“We've got to play better on defense,” Smith said. “The first half, I thought we did a good job; we held them to four points in the second quarter. The second half, we gave up 23 points. Valmeyer's a good ball club, but for them to get 23 points in the second half – we try to keep every team under 40 (points), and we did that, but there were some unorthodox shots that were taken that we just didn't cover.

“We have to work better because it's just going to make us a better ball club. If I had to rate our performance tonight, I'd give it a C-minus. We played OK; if I were watching us in the stands, I'd be licking my chops.”

Teddy Fifer led the Knights with a 20-point effort, including five three-point shots; Braden Woolsey had 15 points for MEL and Jason Johnson nine. The Pirates were led by Michael Chism's 16 points, with Owen Miller and Vaughn Larsen getting five points each.



In other games Monday:

**LITCHFIELD 72, EAST ALTON-WOOD RIVER 52:** Blake Marks' 32-point game wasn't enough as Litchfield defeated East Alton-Wood River 72-52.

Marks was 14-of-14 from the free-throw line and had four three-point baskets. Joel Biesk had eight points for the Oilers, as did Hunter Hall.

Connor Simmons led the Purple Panthers with 20 points, with Matt Meyer adding 15 and Josh Franke 11.



**CLEVELAND JR. NAVAL 49, NEW ATHENS 33:** Cleveland Junior Naval of south St. Louis city got 18 points from Brian Hutson and 17 points from Jamare Cross as the Commanders defeated New Athens 49-33.

Jamez Ewing added five points for Cleveland.

Ethan Cockrell and Jaxson Heintz each had 10 points to lead the Yellow Jackets.

**BUNKER HILL 41, CENTRALIA CHRIST OUR ROCK LUTHERAN 37:** Chase Williams had 17 points, including five three-pointers, as Bunker Hill got past Centralia Christ Our Rock Lutheran 41-37.

Christian Summers added 13 points for the Minutemen.

The Silver Stallions were led by Tyler Fleeman's 10 points, with Eli Palm and Darahn Sparks adding eight points each.

**STAUNTON 46, DUPO 32:** Austin Gusewelle had 13 points on 5-for-10 shooting from the free-throw line as Staunton opened their tournament with a 46-32 win over Dupo.

Brady Kinder added 10 points on 8-for-10 free-throw shooting and Griffin Blanco had nine points for the Bulldogs.

Tony Cozart led the Tigers with 11 points on 7-for-13 shooting from the line with Austin Francis adding seven and Michael Overbay five.

The tournament continues with six more group games beginning at 5 p.m. today in the auxiliary gym and 5:30 p.m. in the main gym; New Athens takes on Alton Marquette at 6:30 p.m. in the auxiliary gym, Roxana meets Marissa at 8 p.m. in the auxiliary gym and East Alton-Wood River takes on Freeburg at 8:30 p.m. in the main gym in games involving area teams.