

Metro East takes home championship title at their own Turkey Tip Off Classic in 53-52 overtime victory

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GLEN CARBON - After nearly a week's worth of competitive basketball and a brief intermission for Thanksgiving festivities, the main event of the **Metro East Lutheran High School Turkey Tip Off Classic** finally arrived.

Coming off their **42-41** win against the **Southwestern High School Piasa Birds**, the **Knights** of MELHS stepped out on their home court for the championship game against **Gibault Catholic High School of Waterloo**.

The Knights and **Hawks** duked it out over the championship crown. However, the extremely close later half of the game caused the teams to push into overtime. Ultimately, the Knights defeated the Hawks by one point with a score of **53-52**.

“it’s one of those wins that the boys really deserve it,” **MELHS Head Coach Anthony Smith** said. “They worked hard over the off-season and compete in quality programs. We’ll celebrate our win tonight, but we’re back to work on monday.”

In the first period, the Knights came out strong against the Hawks. The team made a total of 16 shots to the hoop, missing nine out of the 16 times. The seven shots the team did land outnumbered the Hawks’ three shots totaling up to seven points.

Junior **Kenrique Brown (#3)** tossed in four points for the Knights. His teammates, junior **Braden Woolsey (#23)**, senior **Teddy Fifer (#0)** and junior **Noah Coddington (#35)** also made successful two-point shots. Senior **Jason Johnson (#5)** tossed in two points on back-to-back free throw attempts to close out out their score at 12.

In the 13 shots that the Hawks attempted to make, they could only land three of them, including a three-pointer by junior **Garrett Rueter (#10)** and shots by senior **Jacob Rueter (#11)** and junior **Trevor Davis (#33)**. The score at the end of the first period was **12-7** in the Knights’ favor.



In the second, something seemed to click within the mind of the GCHS players. Senior **Brian Deterding (#42)** took charge for his team, knocking two back-to-back plays into the hoop. With the help of J. Rueter and Davis, the team brought in nine more points.

Johnson scored six more points for the Knights, along with his teammates Fifer and Brown both bringing in two points each for a total of a 10-point gain for the second.

After another scoring play by Deterding, the Hawks tied up the score **22-22** before the end of the second period.

The third period was just as neck and neck as its predecessor. It seemed that once the teams had returned from their locker room chats at half, it was a whole new game. Metro East seemed to lose their offensive control that the crowds saw in the first half. Although Brown, Fifer and Woolsey executed 10 points successfully for the Knights, their team missed a whopping 13 of 19 shots. The Hawks, on the other hand, executed seven of their 15 shot attempts, scoring 12 points. Six points this were scored by GCHS' s Davis alone, along with three points from junior Colin Kessler (#34), two by his classmate Ryan Gool (#3) and one by J. Rueter. This advantage allowed the Hawks to raise slightly above the Knights with a score of **34-32** to end the third.

In the fourth period, MELHS's Fifer really shined, tossing in a three-pointer, two successful free throws, and two standard points for a total of seven points himself. Brown knocked the ball in twice this period, once in a standard play and the other in a free throw attempt. After missing a shot, Johnson quickly came back and landed a pivotal play to extend the Knights' lead.



The Hawks were not going down without a fight. If anything, this fourth period showed the determination that got GCHS into the championships in the first place. C. Kessler scored a whopping eight points this period, with Deterding scoring two points himself. The offensive push wasn't enough to break the inevitable tie that the teams had, so the Knights and Hawks headed into overtime with a score of **44-44**.

This game's overtime situation was one for the record books. The crowd was off of their feet with every shot attempt. In five shot attempts, the Knights nailed a total of nine points in four executions. Gibault could only score eight points in six attempts and four of those shots were successful. With four times out in a row burned by each team, the Metro East Lutheran Knights gained possession of the ball with only a few seconds of time on the clock. The Knights allowed the clock to run out, grasping the first place spot in their own Turkey Tip Off Classic tournament **53-52**.

After the clear hard work provided by Teddy Fifer and Jason Johnson, the championship chose to recognize the players for their determination throughout the tournament.

“ are two of our seniors. They have been solid all year and even last year. They played really good basketball,” Smith said. “Tonight, they came out and really did what they were supposed to do and made it happen for their team. Hopefully, we’ll continue to build on this and keep our momentum going.”