

Carrollton-Calhoun battle once again in boys basketball rivalry, this time Warriors prevail

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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HARDIN – Last season **Carrollton** beat **Calhoun** 78-60 in front of a packed house that honored their 1994-1995 men’s basketball team and retired Sammy Coonrod’s baseball jersey.

It was a night of celebration in Carrollton.

Fast-forward 364 days later with the Hawks and Warriors playing in front of a packed house that honored the 2015 state champion Calhoun Warriors softball team before the game.

It was a night of celebration in Hardin as the Warriors knocked off the Hawks 73-58.

“Any time you get a packed house like this against a conference rival it’s a nice win for the program,” **Calhoun head coach Ryan Graner** said.

“There’s nothing better than beating Carrollton,” **Mitchell Bick** said. I had a lot of fun and I know my team did.”

The Warriors senior guard led all scorers with 21 points, 17 coming in the first half.

Blake Booth paced Bick with 18 points and **Sam Baalman** and **Easten Clark** followed up with 12 and 11 for Calhoun (15-7) (6-2 WIVC).

“We were able to get out and play fast and that’s what we wanted to do from the onset,” Graner said. “When a few shots fall, you get a few breaks, and the breakaways that you need to get that fast start, it really feeds our team it seems like.”

As a team the Warriors shot 56 percent from the field and led the entire way.

“Calhoun played harder, they were more prepared, they executed their game plan,” **Carrollton head coach Jeff Krumwiede** said.

For Carrollton (19-6) (7-1 WIVC) **Jeremy Watson** finished with 17 points. **Luke Gillingham** and **Cole Brannan** each had 11. **Matthew Campbell** came off the bench and scored a career-high 10 points.

The Hawks attempted 25 three-point shots and made five and were 33 percent from the field altogether.

“We rolled the dice a bit and tested them to see how hot they were going to be,” Graner said. Fortunately they missed some shots.”

The game started with an up up-tempo feel.

Calhoun got out to a 13-3 lead within four minutes of the game.

Bick set the tone early with eight points in the opening frame.

“I don’t feel pressure very often and I was into the game and luckily executed,” Bick said.

Right at the end of the quarter, Jared Brackett missed a layup, but stole the ball back as Carrollton was attempting a last second pass, and converted on a second chance layup as time expired to give his team a 25-11 lead.

Calhoun went on a 4-0 run to start the second quarter and got to their biggest lead of the game at 19, 30-11.

That’s when the Hawks woke up.

“With a team like Carrollton they’re not going to go away quietly. That’s never going to happen,” Graner said. “They play too hard and do the little things right.”

They went on an 8-2 run and made three consecutive field goals plus two Brody Howard free throws.

Calhoun did get their lead back up to 17 at 36-19, but Carrollton kept coming and was aided by an intentional foul as Brannan made a layup with 2:57 to go in the half.

Brannan cut the deficit to 13 with his free throw and the Hawks eventually got the Calhoun lead down to nine, 38-29 at the end of the first half.

On Carrollton's first possession in the second half, Watson nailed a triple to make it 39-33 Calhoun, but that's as close as the Hawks would get.

"It was a matter of staying the course, keeping our heads about us, and trying to get back to what got us that lead in the first place," Graner said.

Calhoun gave a total team effort in the second half with great transition play.

Bick scored the majority of the Warriors points in the first half, but Booth took over the scoring reins with 12 points in the second half.

"I told Blake to take over the game whenever you want," Bick said with a laugh. "The whole team can score. Any time I'm getting pressed on they can score too."

Booth scored nine of the Warriors 20 points in the third quarter and started it off with a steal and a layup.

A possession later Jerrett Smith fouled him hard as Booth was going up for a breakaway layup and the Carrollton junior was given an intentional foul for it.

That was all part of a huge 16-3 Calhoun run that separated them from Carrollton for good.

A big part of the Warriors transition success was dominating the boards, which led to points.

"For the most part we did a pretty good job of rebounding," Graner said. "That's what allowed us to get out and run like we wanted to."

Thanks to their third quarter burst, the Warriors led 60-44 going into the final frame.

Carrollton did force some turnovers and got the deficit back down to 10 points, but Calhoun wouldn't let them get closer.

This was the first time Calhoun has beaten Carrollton in a WIVC game since 2010 when the Warriors bested the Hawks, in Hardin 68-67.



Jerrett Smith was playing injured on a compromised right ankle he rolled on Tuesday against Jerseyville.

Smith has been immense for the Hawks of late with his scoring and rebounding output.

As for Calhoun, six-foot, four-inch, forward Damien Pohlman was out.

Hours before the game the IHSA seeded Carrollton and Calhoun into the same regional that will be held in Greenfield.

The Hawks are the #1 seed in a field of 13 teams in the North Greene Sub-Sectional A, while the Warriors are seeded #5 and will play rivals Pleasant Hill.

It is possible that both teams could meet again and it would be in the regional finals, but both coaches want to focus on what's directly in front of them first.

"In my opinion Pleasant Hill is not a 10 seed, they've had a lot of tough losses and are a competitive team," Graner said.

"Our guys have to figure out a way to bring it up a notch if we want to be a championship team," Krumwiede said. "We'll probably win 20 games, but there's got to be a step that you have to take from 20 wins to team to a championship team."

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[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)