



Triad upends CM 51-48 on night to honor coach Rich Mason

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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TROY — A historic Friday night at **Triad High School** ended up in a positive way for the Knights, edging **Civic Memorial** 51-48 as the school's gymnasium was renamed in honor of **longtime boys' basketball coach Rich Mason** in a pregame ceremony. Mason won six regional championships in his 29 years as Triad coach.

The impact Mason has made — and still does — on Triad wasn't lost on first-year **Knights coach Josh Hunt**.

“Obviously, with coach Rich Mason, he means the world to this community,” Hunt said. “What a well-deserved honor. This is really his night; this isn't about us. It's about him, to be a teacher, an administrator, a coach, and really just an advocate for the Triad community for over 40 years. What a neat honor for a great, great man.”

As for the game itself, Hunt felt that his side kept battling after trailing for the better portion of the contest.

“We battled tonight,” Hunt said. “We got down early, and to (CM's) credit, they played really well early, and for us to handle that and kind of keep our wits about us and keep battling, I was happy for how they did, obviously, but I was happy for the way we responded early.”

The Knights made some key shots late, a big deciding factor in the outcome.

“They made some big shots, and we didn’t,” **Eagle coach Doug Carey** said. “And it just came down to who was going to make the bigger plays, and they made the bigger plays down the stretch.”

The Eagles started out well, leading for almost the entire first half and for the majority of the third term before Triad started their rally.



“We started out well,” Carey said. “The beginning of the game, we were making shots, and down the stretch, we just didn’t make a whole lot, and they did; (Noah) Moss played really well, gotta give him all the credit in the world, and they were the better team tonight.”

After an exchange of baskets to open the game, CM went on an 8-0 run, getting a pair of baskets from Jaquan Adams, along with goals from Cayden Clark and Jaxsen Helmkamp. Brett Barbour ended the run with a pair of baskets of his own, sandwiched around a three from Geoffrey Withers. A missed three from behind the midcourt line left the score 13-6 CM at quarter time.

The Knights came back to within four as the second term began, but an Adams basket pushed the lead back to six at 17-11. Triad then cut the lead down to two, but a Helmkamp three pushed the lead back up to 20-15. The Eagles got the edge up to 22-15 on a basket from Adams, who scored 15 in the game. A Moss three got it back down to four, and a free throw from David Lane made the halftime score 23-18 for CM.

The two teams traded baskets to start the second half, and then, the Knights cut the lead down to 26-25, thanks to a three from Jake O’Dell and a basket from Barbour. Triad took their first lead of the night at 29-28 on a lay-in from Kyle Rood, but Lane gave the Eagles the advantage right back on an inside basket where he was fouled on the play. The free throw was missed, and Moss came back down and hit a three to give Triad the lead right back. The Knights held a 34-32 lead at three quarter time, setting the stage for a very important final quarter.

It opened with Helmkamp hitting a three to give the Eagles a one-point lead, then extending it to four, courtesy of three free throws by Lane. CM then lead by a 43-39 score before the Knights started the 12-5 run that would decide the game. Trevor Nott scored to make it 43-41, then Kyle Cox hit a three with 2:57 left to give Triad a 44-43 lead.

A big basket by Adams did give the Eagles the lead back, but O’Dell hit the key basket of the game, a three with just under a minute left that gave the Knights the lead back. Moss extended the lead to four by hitting both ends of a one-and-one, but Clark cut the Triad lead to 49-48 on a three. Moss hit a pair of free throws with 14.3 seconds left in regulation to increase the lead back to three. The Eagles called time out with 6.5 seconds left to set up a final shot to force overtime, but a foul by O’Dell, his fifth, got Clark to the line. Clark missed both of his free throws, and the rebound on the second miss came out to Helmkamp, who’s three-point shot from the top of the key rimmed out and bounced away as the siren sounded.

Hunt was very happy for his team, who's fighting spirit has been a trademark this entire season.

"We talk about that all the time: how are you gonna battle adversity?" Hunt said. "To our kids' credit, I feel like all year, when they get punched in the mouth, they stand up, they get right back up and ready to fight again, and we did that tonight."

And to come back after a tough loss earlier in the week was also a feather in the Knights' caps.

"I'm happy for the boys," Hunt said. "To lose a heart-breaker like we did Tuesday night, and to battle back and hit two big shots like that, that was good for us."

The result tightens the race for the Mississippi Valley Conference title, and after that, the IHSA Class 3A playoffs loom. And for Carey, whose Eagles host Highland Monday night before their regular season finale against Waterloo next Friday night, it's first things first.

"We're trying to get a piece of the conference," Carey said. "We win both games, we get a piece of the conference. So we gotta take care of Highland, see what happens then on Friday against Waterloo. But Highland's first, and that's who we gotta worry about."





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