

Bailey's nine triples leads Southwestern to victory and win No. 100 for Jason Darr

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Justin Bailey loves shooting three-pointers at Metro-East Lutheran High School.

When he was a sophomore in 2015, Bailey connected on 11 triples and scored 40 points in a win over Marissa in the Metro-East Lutheran Thanksgiving Turkey Tip-Off Classic. Last year against Madison in the quarterfinals he sank eight.

Bailey lit up Hooks Gym (secondary court at MELHS) and tallied 27 points on nine three-pointers to lead the Southwestern Birds to a 58-38 first round victory over the Odin Eagles. This was also head coach Jason Darr's 100th career victory at Southwestern.

"If I can figure out what it is we can take it to every game with us. Anytime you can do that it makes things a little bit easier," Darr said. "We got some other kids who can score too but you get a guy with the hot hand then you give him the ball, it's just the way it is."

Coming into this game, Bailey had made a total of 38 shots from beyond the arc in his career in the Turkey Tip-Off Classic. The number is now 47 and counting, but Darr points out that Bailey was cold from long-range in practice recently.

"To be honest he struggled shooting the ball in practice," Darr said laughing. "We run a lot of our stuff through him, and he's kinda struggled the last couple of days, but he turned it on. He's a gamer and that's just the kind of kid he is."

Darr was pleased with his player's performance on defense and allowing 38 points to the Eagles. Last season the Birds gave up an average of 48 points per game and last night they produced a good start.

"I was proud of our kids defensively. is a pretty physical team. We did some good things around the basket and were able to shut off what they want to do," Darr said. "We're not real big, but we're doing a better job of crashing boards and some of the things we were obviously missing from Colin last year."

That includes Ben Lewis who scored eight points but hauled in 15 rebounds, including six on offense, while Cayden Heyen poured in 13 points and grabbed six boards.

The Birds played stout defense, while they rallied with Bailey's shooting.

Southwestern outscored Odin 18-5 in the first quarter with 12 of those points coming from Bailey. In the second quarter, Bailey rained in four triples for 12 points, while Heynen tallied the other four to give the Birds a 34-18 halftime lead. In the second half Southwestern pounded the ball inside more often than not, which led to layups and free throw attempts.

The Birds take on Madison next in the quarterfinals.

