

Gabe Jones sets career-high in points as Hawks advance to regional semifinals

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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RAYMOND - Carrollton head coach Matt Goetten had been waiting for a game like this all season, and so did Gabe Jones.

The Carrollton Hawks full-court press turned the Greenfield-Northwestern Tigers over 22 times which propelled the Hawks to an 80-64 victory in the IHSA Class 1A Raymond (Lincolnwood) Regional Quarterfinals on Monday night.

On the offensive side, Jones poured in a career-high 34 points. The junior connected on six three-pointers and also converted all ten of his free throws.

“When the ball goes in the basket it makes the game a whole lot of fun. This is the kind of effort from Gabe we know he’s capable of giving us,” Goetten said. “Shooting-wise he was on fire tonight. He came out on fire and never cooled down. He was in a zone.”

“They weren’t really guarding me at the three-point line, but I guess they didn’t want me to drive . I had enough space to hit ,” Jones said. “I tried to do the best I could to keep us in the game. I feel like I could’ve done a lot better in the second half, but I’m satisfied.”

Senior Kyle Waters and sophomore Garrett Settles scored 14 and 11 points respectively. Nathan Walker had 12 points.

“Greenfield’s always a tough battle. They always play hard whether it’s a rivalry in the postseason or regular season,” Waters said. “I’m glad that we came out with a W.”

The Tigers were led by Ben Bayless’ 18 points, and the 7-foot-0 center scored most of them off of collecting offensive rebounds. Zane Thomson followed with 12 and Hayden Lansaw added nine points, all on triples.

Both teams came out hot with each draining three triples apiece and attacked the basket well. The Hawks led 19-18 and in the second quarter Jones stamped his authority. He scored 15 of Carrollton’s 17 points in the quarter and had 25 by the end of the half.

Meanwhile, Greenfield-Northwestern continued to own the board's thanks in large part to Bayless but trailed 36-32 at halftime.

“We were trying to keep them off the glass. That was our focus, but we weren’t doing a good job,” Jones said. “Ben Bayless was doing a good job getting the putbacks, and when he catches it, he’s already at the rim. It was kind of our game plan to stop him, but we didn’t execute.”

The third quarter is where the Hawks played to their potential and showed how dangerous they could be on defense.

They kicked it off with a reverse layup by Walker and got back-to-back steals and layups to lead 43-32. Despite, the Tigers making adjustments to guard Jones in a box-and-one, the Hawks found other ways to score. Freshman Seth Howard came off the bench and chipped in four points for the Hawks as well as Settles adding five and Waters six.

“The win comes down to the first three minutes of the second half when we came out, and the pressure finally got to ,” Goetten said.

Carrollton ended the quarter on a 10-0 run in the final 90 seconds, which included a basket and another set of back-to-back steals that led to layups, including one by Settles just before the buzzer.

“Ethan was crazy. He was doing a good job of putting pressure on their guards, so we took advantage of that,” Jones said.

“We got steals, and it helped us build some confidence forward, and it was really fun,” Waters said.

They outscored Greenfield-Northwestern 28-11 in the third quarter and led 64-43.

“That’s what we try to do. Create chaos in the full-court,” Goetten said. “We’re capable of that. seen flashes of it sometimes. The first few minutes and last minute of the third came in waves.”

However, the Tigers would not go quietly as they nearly erased the Hawks' late third quarter blitzkrieg with a 10-2 run of their own. That cut the deficit to 64-51 and forced Goetten to call a timeout to calm his team down.

It worked as Carrollton took more extended possessions and made 12-of-14 free throws to solidify their victory.

Greenfield-Northwestern’s season concludes at 9-16.

The Hawks improve to 10-15 and move on to face Winchester (West Central) Cougars in the semifinals at 7 tonight. The Cougars have beaten Carrollton twice, 72-38 in the Waverly Holiday Tournament and 63-50 at Carrollton two-and-a-half weeks ago.

“They blew us out of the gym at Waverly, and we got a little closer at our place, and hopefully we can get a little closer on the plus side of the scoreboard,” Goetten said. “That’s a great team, and it’s gonna be a tough matchup. I’m looking for the same effort we got out of the guys tonight tomorrow night.”