

# Justin Bailey spear-heads Birds with 27 points to advance to regional finals

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
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WOOD RIVER - A 13-0 run in the third quarter lifted the Piasa Southwestern Birds 46-29 lead and eventually to victory over the Carlyle Indians 62-47 in the Wood River Regional Semifinals at East-Alton Wood River High School on Tuesday night.

Southwestern improves to 21-7 and Carlyle's season ends at 11-20.

“a good team. Don't let their record fool you I mean they play a lot of great competition,” Southwestern head coach Jason Darr said. “We shot the ball pretty well. Anytime we shoot it like that I think we got a chance.”

Justin Bailey nailed five three-pointers and finished with a game-high 27 points with 19 of them coming in the second half.

“The shots were falling, and my teammates were hitting me. It was a great overall game,” Bailey said. “We executed the offense very well. That affects everybody on the court when we're getting stops and come down and hit shots.”

Caden Heyen scored 13, and Caleb Robinson added 12.

Carlyle was led by Luke Boatright's 20 points along with 11 from Chase Taylor and seven from Alex Huels.

The Birds held Tyler Siever to four points after coming into the game averaging 14 and scoring 446 for the season.

“I thought we did a great job on what I think is probably their best kid , who's a really good player. Our kids guarded him really well,” Darr said. “We kept him off of those angles and didn’t allow him to have it around the basket as much as possible. They had some kids that stepped up and scored that kept them in the game.”

Taylor opened the game with a trey, but the Birds answered back with a 10-2 run and led 18-11 after the first quarter.

Southwestern got on a 6-0 run to get the lead up to 24-11, but Carlyle trimmed the deficit to seven before Heyen converted a jump-shot that beat the buzzer. That gave the Birds a 29-20 halftime advantage.

The Indians came out strong in the second half and got as close as 33-29, but then came the big run by the Birds. Bailey scored on two straight layups followed by a three-pointer from Robinson.

The Indians were forced to up the tempo with a full-court press in the fourth quarter, which caused turnovers at times. However when Southwestern would break the press that left plenty of space for Bailey to drain three more triples to help the Birds pull away.

“That gave him some looks. That’s what happens when you pressure and spread things out,” Darr said. “Then you’re obviously gonna let some of our guys that can shoot it go a little bit.”

The four-seeded Birds advance to play the one seed, Wesclin Warriors in the (Trenton Wesclin) Sub Sectional A bracket.

“Hopefully we can control the tempo, but I’m not sure we can. is obviously a lot bigger and probably a little more physical, but we got some kids that play hard,” Darr said. “The bottom line with our guys is they don’t stop guarding. We do a pretty good job from the beginning whistle to the end. That’s always gonna keep you in basketball games.”

For Bailey, Heyen, Lowis, and Robinson it will be their third and final chance to claim a regional championship in their careers.

“It feels good, especially since I haven’t gotten the first two. Hopefully, the third time’s the charm,” Bailey said.



