



# **Hawks fight hard but fall in close battle to undefeated Triopia**

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
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CARROLLTON - Matt Goetten is no believer in moral victories when it comes to basketball.

However, the Carrollton Hawks head coach saw a good amount of positives despite an adverse outcome.

The Hawks fell short to the undefeated Triopia Trojans 74-67 in a Western Illinois Valley Conference game at Carrollton High School on Friday night.

The Hawks leading scorer coming into the night, Gabe Jones was saddled with foul trouble all game long and finished with one point.

“If you told me before the night started that Jones has one point I would’ve said we got beat by 30,” Goetten said. “I bet Gabe didn’t play more than six minutes in this game. Everyone talks about how offensively gifted he is, but he’s a factor on defense. He really wants to compete, and he’s playing aggressively, the way we want him to play, and it just didn’t go his way.”

That meant the Hawks had to look for other options which were capable and the one that stood out was Hunter Flowers.

The junior forward stepped up and finished with a career-high 27 points and was 14-of-15 from the free throw line. Ethan Brannan followed with 14 points while Nathan Walker and Garrett Settles tallied eight apiece. Jacob Graner added seven points.

“We got positive contributions from other people,” Goetten said. “Hunter had a heck of a game on both ends of the floor. I thought when we got back to running our stuff and were patient on offense Hunter got downhill whenever he wanted. I saw some things from Ethan tonight we hadn’t seen this year, but we’ve been on him about getting to the rim. He had a couple of drives to the rim that was special. That’s what we want him to do going forward.”

The Hawks, who were coming off of two victories earlier in the week, move to 3-4 and 0-1 in the WIVC.

Triopia, who improve to 9-0 (3-0 WIVC) was led by Shawn Bell’s 23 points and 10-of-15 from the charity stripe. Garrett Snow’s 18 points followed him before fouling out. Connor Bridgewater and Zach Thompson each chipped in 12 points.

“Triopia’s a good team. Thompson and Bell are gamers. I think these are arguably the two best guards in our conference,” Goetten said.

The Trojans got out to a fast start.

Snow connected on a three-pointer to give them an 18-6 lead and seemed as though it would be a long night for the Hawks, however, Walker answered with a triple of his own to get the game back into single digits.

That sparked a Carrollton run.

Triopia’s Tanner Allen got a basket, but the Hawks countered with eight straight points, six by Brannan that included a steal and a layup to end the first quarter at the buzzer trailing 20-17.

Bell started the second quarter off with an and-1, but three straight buckets by Carrollton tied the game at 23 all. Walker tied the game for the last time at 27-27 and drew a foul in the process, but didn’t sink the free throw. Bell replied with a three-pointer to ignite a 12-4 run into halftime, which concluded with a Snow fade-away baseline shot with seconds remaining to give Triopia a 39-31 lead.



“We got hit in the mouth. We hit them back. They hit us again, and it went back and forth and forth for a while,” Goetten said.

A trey by Flowers and basket by Graner got the Hawks to within four at 40-36 but was the closets they’d get. Bridgewater scored five straight points, and Snow added two more to extend Triopia’s lead to 47-36.

The Trojans lead got up as big as 13 at 64-51 with under four minutes to go in the game. That’s when Carrollton made their comeback attempt.

Goetten called a timeout with 2:42 left in the game and implemented a full-court trap and immediately paid dividends as the Hawks cut the lead in half at 64-58 in 47 seconds causing two straight turnovers and got points. With 1:09 to play Graner connected on a three to cut the deficit to 69-64.

The Trojans, who finished the game going 23-of-36 from the free throw line did enough to ice the game away predominately with Bell and Thompson getting sent to the stripe and making shots.

Carrollton travels to Griggsville-Perry to take on the Tornados at 7:30 p.m. next Thursday and then will face the Routt Catholic Rockets in the first round of the Waverly Holiday Tournament at 10:30 a.m. the day after Christmas.

“It starts for us with defense. Our goal for us was not to turn this into a track meet. have very good athletes, and at times we kind of reverted to that,” Goetten said. “As far as our barometer it gives us a look at where we’re at and what we need to work on going to Griggsville next week.”











