

# High-energy defense and career-night for Brannan lift Hawks over Greenfield-NW

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January 30 2019 3:52 AM









GREENFIELD - Ethan Brannan's voice was barely audible after the game.

On a night where temperatures reached under ten degrees, the fans inside Greenfield High School's gymnasium made courtside communication harder than usual given the rivalry between the Carrollton Hawks and the host Tigers.

Still, despite Brannan's hoarse voice, he had a smile on his face.

The 5-foot-10 junior point guard poured in a career-high 28 points to propel the Hawks to a 75-59 victory over the rival Greenfield-Northwestern Tigers in Western Illinois Valley Conference game on Tuesday night.

The Hawks improve to 10-12 and 2-3 in the WIVC.

"I have no voice now. I was so pumped," Brannan said. "In games like this and the rivalry's between us and Greenfield records mean nothing. We're just glad that we out and played hard and that's what it takes to get the dub. I'm glad I had a good game. I can't take all the credit for that because of the guys driving and kicking out. It's really great."

Brannan scored 20 points in the first half and was efficient from downtown as he connected on 4-of-5 shots from beyond the arc.

Additionally, Garrett Settles notched a career-high of points himself with 13 points. Gabe Jones added 14, and Hunter Flowers chipped in ten points for the Hawks.

“We’ve seen that from Garrett against Liberty. I’d like to see it more. We want him to be more aggressive offensively,” Carrollton head coach Matt Goetten said. “We certainly wanted Ethan to be more aggressive offensively, and he did that tonight. I hope it’s a game that launches Ethan for the rest of the season. We see it every day in practice. We just haven’t seen that sort of production in a game. It’s nice.”

The Tigers, who came into the night on a five-game winning streak, moves to 10-12 and 3-4 in the WIVC.

Senior Dylan Pohlman led Greenfield-NW with 14 points, and Zane Thomson followed with 11. Sophomore Doug McWhorter tallied ten points, and Hayden Lansaw added nine.

The Hawks outscored the Tigers 32-19 in the second half thanks in large part to forcing turnovers with their effective pressing and turning them into baskets.

“We got up and down with them. It was a game where we didn’t want to get into in terms of style,” Tigers head coach Joe Pembroke said. “We knew that we weren’t going to be able to play 32 minutes of that pace. Perhaps we maybe ran out of gas a little bit in the second half. The big thing was their turnovers in the second half led to direct baskets.”

The first half was back-and-forth.

Baskets by Pohlman, Brady Pembroke, and Lansaw gave the Tigers a quick 6-0. A Doug McWhorter layup gave Greenfield-NW their biggest lead of the game at 10-3, but immediately after Jones started what would be a 10-0 run by Carrollton that was capped by a Brannan three-pointer. Brannan sank his second tray to retake the lead for the Hawks at 20-17. However, an and-one by freshman Drake Stuart put the Tigers up 24-22 entering the second quarter.

“They were on a five-game winning streak, and we knew they were going to come out and bring it,” Hunter Flowers said. “I liked the way that we came back in the first quarter and answered pretty well.”

Brannan kick-started a 10-2 run as he scored eight points, including two more triples that gave Carrollton a 32-26 lead. The hot shooting of Brannan was a surprise even to himself coming into the game.

“It was kind of out of nowhere,” Brannan said about his shooting form. “I kind of got going in the Beardstown Tournament, but not a whole lot. Not like tonight. “It means a lot. I’ve been struggling; I’ve been in a slump. Tonight, getting going on those threes, driving and getting those calls and making those free throws. I’m really shocked. I’m glad I finally got going, and hopefully, I can continue that for the rest of the season.”

The Hawks would stretch their lead to as big as seven, but the Tigers crept back in and managed to trail 43-40 at halftime.

Baskets by Pohlman and Ben Nord gave Greenfield-NW a slim 44-43 lead, but things would take a big turn toward the Hawks favor after that.

Carrollton’s high-tempo defense forced 26 turnovers by the Tigers.

“That’s what we need to do to win games, and sometimes 26 isn’t enough,” Goetten said. “I challenged the guys at halftime to hold them under 60. I felt like there was a couple of stretches there where we could’ve pushed it deeper. Didn’t get there, but I credit Greenfield and coach Pembroke. He’s always got his guys ready to play. He came out with a good game plan, and the fans got an entertaining game tonight.”

Senior Nathan Walker gave the Hawks the lead for good on a layup, which ignited a 17-5 run. Jones scored eight of his 14 points in the third quarter and boosted the Hawks lead to 61-49. The Tigers made 3-of-6 free throws to cut the deficit to 61-53 heading into the fourth quarter, but that’s as close Greenfield-NW would get.

In an up-tempo game that had a lot of fouls, the Tigers were successful at getting to the free throw line 35 times but were able to convert 17 shots.

“When you’re down ten with about two or three minutes to go those really add up,” Pembroke said. “When you shoot under fifty-percent for the game and knowing you shoot over 30 total free throws you’ve got to take advantage of some of those opportunities. We knew we’re going to face a very aggressive team, and we were able to get them in a lot of foul trouble. Unfortunately, we didn’t execute at the foul line.”

The Hawks will travel north to Winchester this Friday to take on the No. 6 team in Class 1A AP state rankings, the West Central Cougars (19-5).

“It feels really good because got us to win No. 10,” Flowers said. “We’re looking to capitalize on this and bring this energy into the game on Friday against West Central. “They’re definitely going to be the toughest opponent that we’ve played all year, and I can’t wait to see what we can do.”

















