

# **Brown Leads All Scorers With 21: Cook Scores 20 Points, Carson Adds 14 As Lincoln Pulls Away Over Granite In Holiday Classic**

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COLLINSVILLE – Mario Brown led Granite City with 21 points, while Trevon Bond added 12 on four three-pointers, but the Warriors had difficulty defending Payton Cook, who had 20 points, while Ki'on Carson added 14 points to help Lincoln take a 52-43

win over Granite in the opening round of the 38<sup>th</sup> Prairie Farms Collinsville Holiday Classic boys basketball tournament Wednesday afternoon at Vergil Fletcher Gym.

The Warriors held steady with the Railsplitters in the first half, trailing at the half 25-20, but Lincoln steadily pulled away in the third quarter to take control and take the win.

“First of all, it’s a tough game,” said Granite head coach Gerard Moore. “They had multiple guys that we have to key in on and you can only do so much with so much firepower. I thought coach (Neil) Alexander came in in the second half and he made an adjustment. He started going to (Cook) and we are undersized. Our game plan was to stay home and not help as much on the shooters on penetrational post-up. But (Cook), being 6’ 7”, he was long and athletic and he was skilled. He was able to shoot right over the top of us and there was nothing we could do. And if you do help, they kick to the shooters and that created major, major issues for us.”

Both Bond and Brown had another good game each for the Warriors, who hung in and did all they could, but the Railers were too much on the day.

“I thought we did a good job handling their pressure defense,” Moore said. “Lincoln traditionally will turn you over and they do a good job of making your offense very difficult to work. But today, we found some shots, we got some shots. I thought Mario and Tre did a good job shooting the ball, Ivan (Gaston) did a good job shooting it also. Offensively, we were able to hang in there, but we just could not stop (Cook). He’s just a tough coverer and that was the difference in the game. Offensive rebound, here and there, was him. Our inability to box him out just created so many issues for us.”

Granite was able keep in striking distance of Lincoln in the first half, but in the second half was when the Railers took control and pulled away from the Warriors.

“First half, we did a good job, I thought, disrupting their offense,” Moore said. “They were unable to flow, like they usually do offensively. But like I said, the second half, they came out, they made adjustments, they started going to their bigs because we’re a whole lot undersized than they were. And that created a lot of movements for them.”

The two teams started the game by trading baskets before Bond hit a three that put Granite up 5-4, with the two sides trading baskets before Brown hit off a rebound to give the Warriors a 10-9 lead after the first quarter. The Warriors were able to maintain their one-point lead at the start of the second quarter before baskets by Jayden Moore and Carson put Lincoln up 17-14. The Railers managed to expand their lead to four points before another Brown three put Granite to within 19-18. Lincoln then went on a 6-1 run, keyed by Cook, to take a 25-20 halftime lead.

Brown hit a basket from outside to cut the lead to 25-22 at the start of the third quarter, but Lincoln then went on a 16-5 run that lasted until the end of the third quarter, with Cook leading the charge and Carson adding on the key baskets that made the score 41-27 for the Railers after three quarters. In the fourth, Lincoln maintained their advantage, although the Warriors had a charge led by Brown and Gaston to cut the lead to 52-40, but the Railers went on to their 52-43 win to advance into the quarterfinals.

To go along with Cook's 20 and Carter's 14 points, Lincoln got five points each from Trey Schilling and Aiden Gowin, four points from Jake Biven and three points from Camden Nelson. In addition to Brown's 21 points and Bond's 12 points, the Warriors got six points from Gaston and two points each from Milton Dowell and Alvin Valentine.

The Railsplitters are now 11-1 and meet Belleville East, a 49-40 winner over McCluer North of Florissant, Mo., in the semifinals at Fletcher Gym, while the Warriors, now 5-8, play against the Stars in the consolation quarters Thursday morning in the auxiliary gym, with both games starting at 11:30 a.m.

