

Rivals Knights-Panthers Battle, But Triad Powers To Regional Championship 42-25

by Nathan Tucker

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BETHALTO - Two familiar opponents faced each other in Friday night's Class 3A Boys Basketball Regional Final at Civic Memorial High School when Triad met up with conference foe Jerseyville for the third time this season. Despite the Panthers improving on their previous performances, Triad still came out on top, 42-25 the final score in Bethalto.

It's been a record-setting season for the Knights. Now at 27-6, they've set a school record for most wins in one season. The previous mark, 24 wins, was set in the 2019-2020 season.

"I'm excited for our players obviously," Triad Knights head coach Jeff Guidry said postgame. "I'm excited for our community, it's been a long time since we've done this here. We've had this mission since we got here a few years ago, and I'm really proud of our guys. We've put in all the work, we've got a great group of leaders, a great group of kids, and I just couldn't be more excited for all these guys."

"Hats off to Jerseyville," Guidry said. "They came out with a really good game plan. One we thought they might have, a real "Triangle and two" defense. They tried to maintain possession and keep the ball out of our hands. As I said, hats off to them, they came out ready to go."

"Last night, we installed a new offense of our own, I don't think Triad was ready for that," said Panthers head coach Caleb Williams following his team's loss Friday night. "It was a different look for us, and I don't think they were as ready for it defensively."

We wanted to do something different tonight than our past two games against (Triad) to make them adjust.”

The new-look offense kept the Panthers in the game throughout the first half, but stalled down the stretch. Ayden Kanallakan’s eight points on the night led the Panthers on the score sheet. Drew Winslow led all scorers with 13 points for the Triad Knights, his teammate Ethan Stewart following him up with ten points of his own.

Unfortunately for Caleb Williams and his Panthers team, the season ends Friday night. But the Jersey coach was quick to credit his team for their efforts on the campaign.

“I came into it late, just a month before the season,” said Williams, talking about his appointment as the head coach in Jerseyville. “I didn’t really know what I had with the kids. We were changing the system completely from the guy that was there for 17 years. (coach name) (The new system) gets bought into from day one, no questions asked, this team did everything I asked. I thought they did a great job.”

While the 22-23 campaign ends for Williams and Jersey, the real work begins for Jeff Guidry and Triad. The Knights will look ahead to sectional play, where they face Mount Vernon at Centralia High School on Wednesday, March 1. If Triad were to defeat Mount Vernon, they’d face the winner of East St. Louis and Centralia in the Sectional Final on Friday, March 3.

“We’re going to take the day and enjoy this championship,” said Guidry, while watching his team lift the 3A Regional Championship plaque. “We’ll come back Sunday or Monday. Every team we’re going to play is good. We’re gonna come back, and we’re going to have to shoot better if we want to keep going.”

