



North Greene's Vincent MVP in South All-Star win over North

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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For most athletes, all-star games are events that are taken less seriously than a normal every day of the mill game. Players mingle with one another, share plenty of laughs, and go out and have fun.

That is what North Greene guard Connor Vincent did overall, but he played with a fire in his eye and had a high intensity on both offense and defense.

Vincent scored 17 points, sank three treys, and was the MVP of the South team that defeated the North team 101-97 in the 33rd annual Pepsi All Star Classic at North Greene High School on Saturday night.

"I just wanted to play hard because I haven't gotten the chance in a long time," Vincent said.

His season was cut short on January 10th in the first round of the Winchester Invitational Tournament when he broke his left wrist after landing on it awkwardly. He averaged 15.5 points per game during the season.

"He was phenomenal. I thought he really sparked us," Greenfield-Northwestern head coach Joe Pembroke said. Pembroke was serving as the South head coach.

Michael Mast of Liberty was the MVP of the North team as he led all scorers with 19 points and drained two triples. Mast was also the slam-dunk champion.

Other top scorers for the North were Jason Dormire (Camp Point) with 12, Joseph Myers (Griggsville) with 11, and Hunter Flesner (Payson) with 10. Eric Lee (Camp Point) and Carter Epperson (Payson) had 9 points apiece.

For the South, Cody Leonard (Carrollton) had 9 points, Trevor Cawthon (West Central), Luke Palan (Carrollton), Jake Varble (Jerseyville), and Gus Baalman (Calhoun) all had 8 points.

Austin Plogger (Greenfield-Northwestern) finished with 14 points and two three-pointers for the South team and loved every second of the experience.

“It felt awesome. It was fun playing with all the guys that you’ve always competed against and it was just fun to get out there and compete for one last time,” Plogger said.

The feeling was mutual for Vincent.

“It was nice to play with my teammates and play with everyone else that I’ve usually played against in the area,” Vincent said.

Coach Pembroke was thankful to be the head coach of the South team and was also glad to be on the same side of all the kids he’s coached against.

“It’s a great honor to be asked to do this. It’s a nice event where the seniors can come out, showcase their skills, I’m just thankful to be a part of it,” Pembroke said. “What a blessing it is to be asked to do this and it’s nice to have them on my team for a change.”

There were four 10-minute quarters with frequent substituting and intermissions that involved contests ranging from free throws, long range shooting and the dunk contest.

The game got off to a fast start. The South led 35-26 after the first quarter; Palan did all of his scoring in the first frame and made it look easy as he has done so all season long for the Carrollton Hawks. He assisted a pretty pass to Luke Shively (Jerseyville) and then drained a three-pointer on the next possession.

As the second quarter began the South started to increase the lead and showed off their speed on fast breaks. Vincent connected on a triple then on the next possession converted on a reverse layup to get the lead up by 15 at 41-26. The North, led by Mast, would cut the deficit back to 9 at 55-46, but the South went on an 8-0 run to close out the half.

The South picked up where they left off from the second quarter into the third quarter as they went on a 17-7 run. Leonard started to assert himself in the game as he got a couple of rebounds and layups. Along with Varble and Vincent he went to the charity stripe four times. As a team the South shot 33 percent from the line (4-12). The North shot 63 percent (5-8).

The South capped the third quarter with an acrobatic layup by Smith and then a buzzer-beating shot by Varble. The South led 90-65 going into the fourth quarter, but things started to change.

The North went on a 10-0 run to start the quarter as the run of play started to get fancy once again. Palan executed a stunning no-look, half-court left handed pass to Luke Shively (Jerseyville), who flipped the ball to Baalman for an easy two points. Then Vincent slinged a back door pass to Plogger, who laid the ball up and in. Shortly after that Vincent, on a breakaway, ally-ooped the ball to himself for a finger-roll layup.

That would be the last of the South tricks as the North started trimming the deficit in rapid time. Kaleb Bradshaw, Jordan DeHart (Griggsville), and Collin Clinging (Brown County) all sank a trey apiece to cut the South lead to 96-88 all part of a 13-0 run. The North got as close to four points at 101-97 when their bench started to come alive with under a minute to play but the South began to dribble the air out of the ball with Palan and Vincent willingly obliged. Nobody scored in the last minute as the South hung on for the victory.

“It got to a point where it was extremely competitive at the end and thank goodness the South won,” Pembroke said.

North Most Valuable Player – Michael Mast (Liberty)

South Most Valuable Player – Connor Vincent (North Greene)

Free Throw Champion – Weston Billings (Western) (9)

3-Point Champion – Evan Ehrhardt (Western) (11)

Dunk Contest Champion – Michael Mast (Liberty)

Alumni Game MVP – Reed Rusten (North Greene Class of 2014)

Rainbow Shot Winner – Anthony Willeford (North Greene Class of 2010)