

# Wildcat Boys' Hopes Fade As Crusaders Find Groove

For half the game, the Mulvane High School boys had a chance to topple Buhler. It would have been something: last place tees off on first place.

Then they played the second half and the real Buhler found its groove. The Crusaders out-scored the Wildcats, 51-22, and pulled away for an 86-46 triumph in a league game Tuesday night, Feb. 22, in Mulvane.

Until those final two quarters, though, it was anybody's ball game. "In the first half, we handled their pressure well, we took our time and we executed," said Coach Scott Dunham. "In the second half, we got kind of sloppy with the ball and they just wore us out. The more worn down we got, the worse it got."

The win left the Crusaders on top in Division III of the Ark Valley Chisholm Trail League. Buhler is 8-1 and 16-3 overall while the Wildcats are 1-18 overall and 0-9 in the league.

"Buhler got an awful lot of baskets off transition," said Dunham. "We had 25 turnovers and that hurt our chances of staying in the game with them. Our kids played hard but we just can't seem to overcome that turnover problem. You can't beat anybody turning the ball over 25 times. It's just not going to happen. That's too many extra possessions for the other guys."

The Wildcats came out with a new lineup and a fresh approach to defense. "We did some good work on defense in the first half," said Coach Dunham. "We played a junk defense and tried to take away the Cameron and Shumacher kids with a triangle-and-two. And for a while it worked. But you have to leave so many holes open on the court and in the second half, they made adjustments and started hitting those holes."

After Buhler started figuring things out, it was curtains, because the Buhler pressure

started to build, creating a mountain of mistakes by the Cats. "Their lead at halftime was nine points and we were doing all the right things," said Dunham. "We just disrupted their offensive flow and they held the ball a lot trying to find the openings and trying to find what would work against our defense. Those two factors kept it close but as the game went on that happened less and less."

Buhler started getting its running game untracked and started pulling away. "I think they really just wore us down," said Dunham. "They were more physical, especially out front. They worked our guards over pretty good and that tends to wear on smaller players. They just played a little deeper than we did and had more weapons than we did. That's what took over in the second half."

Most of Mulvane scoring punch came from the inside game. Junior Adam Edwards led the scoring for Mulvane with 11 points and senior J.D. Sorensen finished with 10. Dylan Donaldson, a freshman making his first start of the season, scored nine and John Knight had eight. Mason Leonard scored four points before fouling out.

"Our inside players put up almost all of our scoring load," said the Wildcat mentor. "We got 35 points inside and that's not enough from our guards."

Turnovers iced the Wildcat hopes Friday night, Feb. 18, when the Cats went to Augusta. Shooting wasn't the culprit this time.

"It always seems to be something," said Coach Dunham after the Orioles ran over his Wildcats by a 77-53 score. "We finally had a pretty good shooting night but had trouble handling the ball. Another key stat was free throws. We actually shot better from the field than we did at the free throw line."

The Wildcats committed 22 turnovers, which overshadowed a good shooting and

good rebounding game.

"We try to look at turnovers as a possible four-to-six point swing," said Dunham. "You don't score and they do score. They came out and put some man pressure on us and we really struggled a few times with it. They forced us into some errors, which hurt our effort. We had 10 of those turnovers in transition, which we haven't been having a problem with."

What really hurts with the turnovers is that gives the other team more opportunities to shoot the ball—and make a bucket. "We hit 46% from the field, which was one of our best games of the season, and that was better than Augusta shot but when you have turnovers, it gives the other team the ball 10-to-20 more times in a game and that generates into points."

The strange thing about this squad, says Dunham, is the majority of turnovers come in the half-court offense. "Normally, we have been handling the pressure better than we did the other night. What happens is we get impatient. We'll make a couple of passes and go for the basket. We're not letting our offensive movement and screens work for us."

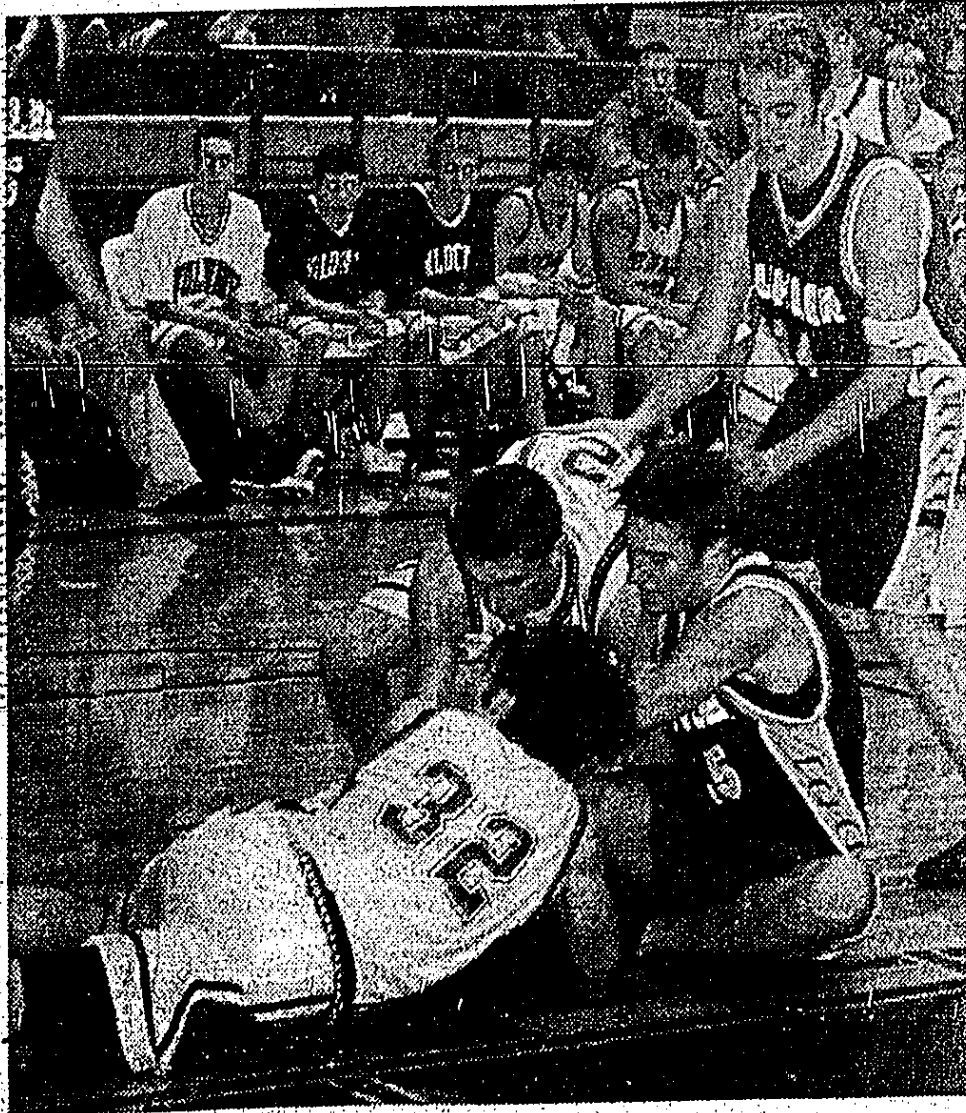
Dunham has had so many combinations of starters on the floor, he can't remember them all. "I've juggled the line-up quite often, trying to find something that will work, but our problem is different guys give us different things," said Dunham. "I can see ahead this off season that we want to get everybody more balanced so we can have kids who do everything well, not just one or two things."

The Orioles blasted the game open in the 2nd quarter when they out-scored the Cats, 26-13, to take a 19-point halftime lead. Mulvane never recovered from that jolt.

Several players had excellent offensive games. Center J.D. Sorensen finished with 10 points and guard Tyler Ruder scored 12. Freshman guard Dylan Donaldson had his best game of the season and scored nine points. Mason Leonard dumped in seven points and Kyle Womacks scored six.

"Tyler had a good game shooting the basketball and Dylan shot the ball like I know he can and also had only two turnovers," said Dunham.

Mulvane's final game in the regular season will be tonight (Feb. 24) at home against Rose Hill. The next week, the Cats will be playing in the Wellington 4A Sub-State. The first round game for MHS boys will be Monday night, Feb. 28, in Belle Plaine. The Dragons are the No. 1 seed and have lost only one game. Mulvane is the No. 8 seed and has won only one game.



Mulvane's Kyle Womacks (32) and John Knight (21) wrestle for a loose ball against Buhler

#### Boys Varsity

Buhler	10	25	21	30-86
Mulvane	10	14	8	14-46

Buhler—Brody Gustafson 11, Brett Williamson 8, Brandon Cameron 22, Aaron Schumacher 14, Andrew Epp 12, Kyle Ward 3, Austin Boshears 2, Nate Goering 2, Ryan Peak 8, Jared Rizzo 1, Brian Lind 3. FG 34 (8), FT 10-15, F 18.

Mulvane—John Knight 8, Mason Leonard 4, Kyle Womacks 4, J.D. Sorensen 10, Adam Edwards 11, Dylan Donaldson 9. FG 18 (1), FT 6-7, F 16.

Mulvane	12	13	11	17-53
Augusta	18	26	15	18-77

Mulvane—Kyle Womacks 6, Tyler Ruder 12, Dylan Donaldson 9, J.D. Sorensen 10, Adam Edwards 4, John Knight 4, Sage Swaney 1, Mason Leonard 7. FG 20 (6), FT 7-17, F 17.

Augusta—Brett Kenyon 24, Caleb Pazzie 3, Tyler Nordman 11, Derek Anglemeyer 5, Kirby Nickel 10, Cole Hancock 7, Bricé Simon 3, John Harris 5, Joe Habiger 7. FG 29 (7), FT 12-21, F 13.