

'Trial By Fire' Learning Sometimes A Painful Path

It's a trial by fire and the Mulvane High School boys are getting their fingers singed. At least, they're not getting burned up.

The Wildcats slumped to 0-6 Friday night, Dec. 17, when the visiting Wellington Crusaders bruised the Cats by a 64-44 count in an Ark Valley Christolm Trail League Division III game.

"I really thought we played a lot harder than we did earlier in the week at Ft. Dorado," said Coach Scott Dunham. "I thought we were more intense, and we played better defense. We just couldn't get the ball in the basket. We kind of expected to be up and down this year but so far, we've been down as far as putting the ball in the basket. We got a ton of shots in the paint the other night, a lot of wide-open three-point shot opportunities but we can't seem to convert on them."

Going into the season, Dunham knew his first edition of Wildcats was going to be "game young." Only one player had any varsity minutes at all last year.

"We're getting the shots we need from our offense," noted Dunham, "but we're rushing them. That's what you do when you're inexperienced because of the pressure of a game. In a game, you have the fans and the outcome of the game's on the line." That's just a major part of our growth right now.

"It's a trial by fire. We're going to be up and we're going to be down. Hopefully by the middle of the season, we'll get more consistent at the offensive end. In the Ft.

Dorado game, we made only four shots out of 16 that we tried in the paint. You're not going to get anything better than shots in the paint. I don't think we shot any better than that against Wellington either."

The Wildcat coach said he had little complaint with the defense; "The defense is getting where we want to be but when you're not scoring points, it just adds to the pressure of everything," said Dunham.

Mulvane came out cold against Wellington, giving the Crusaders a chance to build an early lead. By the end of one quarter, Wellington was up by a 20-8 score. That 12-point spread was maintained until the last quarter when the Cat boys had to take more chances on defense.

"We got it down to 11 and had a couple of chances in the 3rd quarter to get it down to single digits but didn't capitalize on them," said Dunham. "Later, we started running out of time and had to foul. We put them on the foul line too many times. They had 35 free throws. A lot of them came late but you still have to limit the opposition to a lot less than 35 shots at the line."

The real problem offensively is nobody is stepping up consistently. "So far, we just haven't had anyone we knew we could count on for some points regularly," said Dunham. "Logan (Sorensen) gives us some points, J.D. has given us a couple of solid games offensively and against Wellington, Mason (Leonard) gave us some points. I'd like to see more consistently from our seniors."

Logan Sorensen had 14 points against Wellington to take team honors and Leonard scored 12. But the 6-7 J.D. Sorensen got into early foul trouble and finished with only two points after being in double digits in two games in the Douglass Tournament.

After the two seniors, the production dropped off to four points from Kyle Womacks, Ryan Herrig, Chris Wilson and John Knight.

"In each of our last three games, we've gotten as many shot opportunities as our opponents have, but we just haven't converted," said Dunham.

Dunham said he had been getting a number of sophomores in the games, hoping that "trial by fire" can pay off in the future. The

6-4 Wilson started the game as did Herrig, a point guard-type. Both are sophomores as is the 6-2 Knight and Zach Thiesing, who saw his first varsity action of the year.

"They are getting some good experience but it's at a cost. They don't always produce the results we want," said Dunham.

In another area of the game, rebounding, Dunham is fairly pleased. The Cats have been holding their own on the boards. "In our first two games, we were beaten on the boards but since that time, we're pretty close to even. Chris Wilson is doing a good job on the boards. He's hitting them hard and he's playing good defense. I know he can be an offensive threat, too, but it's just a matter of getting more experience."

The Wildcats will be taking a few days off during the holiday break, but will start practices on Monday morning, Dec. 27. "We're just going to shoot the heck out of things over the Christmas break and try to find our shooting touch," said Dunham. "You can't shoot it for them. You just put

them into the best possible position. They have to shoot it."

Wellington also won the B-team battle, downing the Cats, 48-31. Top scorers for the MHS jayvees were Danny Schneider with nine points, Brock Kendall with five and Collin Mangus with four.

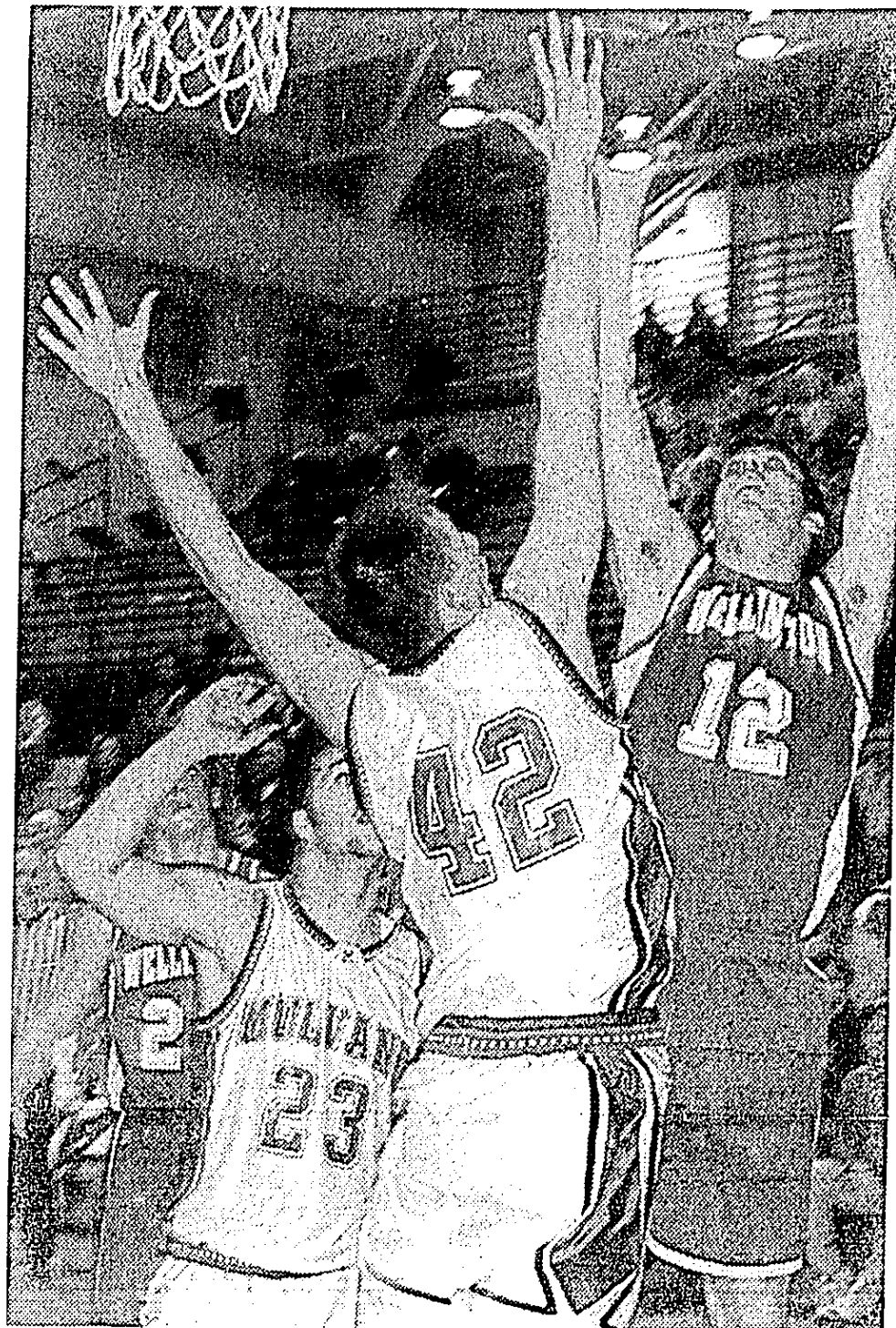
The MHS Cats will be gunning for their first win when Augusta visits Mulvane Friday, Jan. 7.

Boys Varsity

Wellington	20	15	8	24	67
Mulvane	8	15	8	13	44
Wellington	Cody Calder 10, Rod Heasty 4, Matt Felt 3, John Heath 11, Luis White 19, Kirby Hefflen 16, Drew Spencer 1, FG 20 (5), FT 19 (3), F 15				
Mulvane	Logan Sorensen 14, Ryan Herrig 4, Chris Wilson 4, Kyle Womacks 4, Mason Leonard 12, John Knight 4, J.D. Sorensen 2, FG 20 (1), FT 3 (4), F 24				

Junior Varsity Boys

Wellington	13	16	10	9	48
Mulvane	9	6	7	9	31
Wellington	Cody Riggs 10, C.J. Carey 1, Rod Heasty 8, Cole Shaffer 6, Jay Masonhall 6, Justin Thompson 4, Trenton Rains 4, Isaac Stewart 2, Trevor Church 2, Kerby Heffley 5, FG 21 (2), FT 4 (8), F 19				
Mulvane	Danny Schneider 9, Brock Kendall 5, Sage Swaney 2, Syler Swaney 2, Collin Mangus 4, Zach Thiesing 2, Quanton Smith 1, John Knight 2, Levi Hen 1, FG 11 (2), FT 7 (16), F 12				



Wildcats Chris Wilson (42) and Mason Leonard (32) try to stop a Crusader shooter