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Hornets Sting Bearcats

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*By Andrew Cato,
ShowMe Times Sports*

ADVANCE, Mo. - The Dexter Bearcats had to go into one of the most hostile environments in Stoddard County basketball Friday night (Feb. 4) when they faced off against the Advance Hornets.

To make things even more interesting, it was Advance's Homecoming, and the Bearcats were playing without the help of senior Alan Flannigan, who was out sick for the night. Flannigan, as well as several of his teammates, have been battling the flu for most of the week. The Bearcats weren't able to crash the Hornets' Homecoming, with Advance coming out on top with a final score of 65-49.

The Bearcats came out a little fuzzy in the first quarter. Hunter Wilson hit a 15 foot jumper on the opening possession of the game for the Hornets; teammate Grant Gray was good from beyond the arc at the 6:00 mark to help Advance jump out on a quick 10-0 run to start the game. Jake Cox made a big steal on the ensuing possession and took the ball the length of the court to put Dexter's first two points on the board. Advance held the lead, 16-5, at the end of the first quarter.

Tyler Miller opened the second quarter with a steal for the Bearcats, but wasn't able to score. Advance went on a quick 6-0 run to open the frame, but Miller came up with a big

block and two rebounds to help swing the momentum back in the Bearcats' favor. The 'Cats were able to cut Advance's lead to six points with three minutes left in the half, but Gray nabbed the ball on a mishandled pass to put an end to Dexter's offensive surge.

Junior Jake Lee had a hard block on Advance's Darren VanGennip with 50 seconds left in the half. The 'Cats were able to scoop the ball and sophomore Chase Young hit a deep three with just seconds left on the clock, but the Hornets still held a 10 point lead going into halftime.

Cox made his second steal of the night in the opening minutes of the third, but the Hornets were still able to force a 6-0 run to start the second half. The Bearcats made sloppy passes throughout the quarter and Advance capitalized, scoring eight of their 14 points in the frame off turnovers. Dexter went 2-9 from the free-throw line and were held to six points in the frame; Advance held a commanding 18 point lead at the end of the quarter.

Wilson hit his only three of the night in the opening minute of the fourth quarter, increasing the Hornets' lead to 21. Miller again led the 'Cats in the fourth with two deep threes, a three point play, and another block. Bryn Hester and Young also came up with steals for the Bearcats in the quarter, but Dexter was never able to cut Advance's lead to less than 13 points. Dylan Dunivan picked off a pass from Taylor Jarrell in the closing minute of the game, dropped in a layup, and drew a charge, but was unable to connect on his free-throw for the three-point play. The Hornets went on a six point run to close the contest, ending with a 16 point victory on their homecoming night.

"Besides Alan [Flannigan], Jake Lee, Jordan Fitts, and Jake Cox were all out with sickness this week," Bearcat coach Rob Nichols said after the game, "So I knew we would struggle for energy a little bit, but again: we didn't play well, and we didn't handle the ball well."

"He [Flannigan] played up in St. Louis all summer, so we've played without him before," Nichols said. "For the most part, we played better offensively than what we did tonight; we didn't look as tight." "In the summer, they were more free with it and more aggressive; tonight they [Dexter] didn't look like they wanted to make a mistake, which led to a lot of mistakes." "There just wasn't any consistent offensive attack tonight."

"We just had too many turnovers right at the beginning." Tyler Miller said after the game. "We got down and just couldn't get back up; we still had the New Madrid game in our heads from all the turnovers, and it was hard to deal with that."

“Obviously we think that, us being the Dexter Bearcats, we’ve got a lot to prove without Alan [Flannigan] being here,” said Jake Lee, “but it was a tough loss for us. Shots weren’t falling for us tonight.”

“I’ve been out three days this week with the flu,” Lee continued,”and I’m totally drained out. We’re all going to get back in the gym Sunday, get healthy, and look for that win Tuesday night. We’ve just gotta keep our heads together, because it could be real easy to break apart as a team right now.”

Photo above Dexter's Jake Cox takes the ball down court during Friday night's loss to Advance. The Hornets won their Homecoming game over the Bearcats, 65-49.

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