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# Bernie's Season Ends With District Loss to Scott County Central

MARCH 02ND 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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**Bloomfield, Missouri** – The season came to an end for the Bernie Mules with the defending state champions Scott County Central boys basketball team defeating them in the District Championship Friday evening.

The Mules led by as much as 15 points in the first half but came up short when the top-seeded Braves rallied from behind tallying 53 points in the second half to secure their District win.

The Mules came out hot in the first two quarters leading by 13 points going into the locker room at the half.

“In the first half they played us all man and we were able to use time management,” commented Bernie head basketball coach Brad Botsch. “It is almost like in football when a team controls the offense by putting the ball on the ground and continuing to run. We are not a strong defensive team and the way we were able to compete a lot this year was by having ball-control with our ball-handling skills. We were able to execute very well in the first half and kept their scoring down, but in the second half they really stepped up.”

Braves' powerhouse Jeffery Porter hit his only 3-pointer of the game at the buzzer at the end of the third period to put Scott County Central in the lead. Porter went

on to score a game-high 39 points for the Braves.

“They were hungry,” stated Botsch. “They are the best basketball program in the history of the state of Missouri and there is a reason for that. Their kids compete extremely hard and are tough. They hurt us on the glass all night long and that’s why we have to hold the ball because we are not very big and don’t play good defense. We have got to have the ball in our hands so the other team doesn’t get possessions because when they do they are either going to score or get the offensive stick back. Scott Central was relentless and I knew even at halftime with a 13-point lead we were going to have our hands completely full to try to win this game.”

Senior Caleb Ellenburg paced the Mules with a team-high 25 points.

Senior Brandon Sparks recorded 18 points including one trey.

Matt Vernon, also a senior, recorded 14 points including one 3-pointers before fouling out late in the game.

“Caleb, Brandon, and Matt have really had to carry us offensively,” Botsch said. “Caleb averaged about 20 to 21 points a game and Brandon and Matt were right at 13 or 14. We just don’t have much depth or a lot of scoring from other sources. We had to find ways to score and Caleb carried that load. If you want to win a district championship you have to get stops and we weren’t able to get stops. That has a lot to do with how good they are.”

The Bernie Mules (22-6) will graduate six seniors off their team. They won the Holcomb Invitation Tournament this year along with the Bloomfield Christmas Tournament and the Stoddard County Athletic Association (SCAA) Tournament.

“Just tremendous kids,” Botsch continued. “I cannot say enough about our seniors and the things they have done. We are going to really miss them. They are going to be great, productive individuals and have a lot to be proud of. This is what we play for and we are disappointed we didn’t win tonight, but we couldn’t be more proud of a group of kids. It was a great season. It just didn’t end like we wanted it to.”

**Final Score #1 Scott County Central 73, #2 Bernie 63**

Bernie 17 16 15 15 - 63

Scott County 14 6 31 22 - 73

**Bernie (63)** – Matt Vernon 14, Brandon Sparks 18, Caleb Ellenburg 25, Devin Trammell 4, Gavin Smith 2. FG 25, FT 11/12, F 19. (3-pointers: Vernon 1, Sparks 1. Fouled Out: Vernon).

**Scott County Central (73)** – Jeffery Porter 39, Tyus Banks 2, Drake Kesler 5, Trevion Moore 8, Javonta Daniel 13, Matthew Blissett 6. FG 29, FT 12/19, F 15. (3-pointers: Kesler 1, Porter 1, Moore 1. Fouled Out: None).

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