

SWEPT COUGS, WEST MONTGOMERY

West Brunswick Turned Back In 2-A Sectional III Finals

BY JOHNNY CRAIG

A mere one game separated West Brunswick from the state eastern regional basketball tournament prior to last Saturday's matchup of the underdog Trojans and powerful Waccamaw Conference champion Whiteville. The Trojans had scraped past West Montgomery in the opening round of the Sectional III tourney last Tuesday then nipped East Bladen 72-64 on Thursday in the semifinals to qualify for Saturday's title match.

Whiteville once again proved to be the league's best as the Wolfpack wore down West Brunswick 59-43 and won the right to join three other 2-A teams in this week's eastern regional tournament in Fayetteville.

The winner of the regional tourney will advance to the state finals next week in Chapel Hill.

Saturday's title match marked the fourth time this season West Brunswick had met the Wolfpack. Whiteville won both regular-season games then edged the Trojans 63-55 in the second round of the league tournament.

Whiteville was forced to win the latest encounter with clutch free throw shooting down the stretch as West Brunswick sent the Wolfpack to the stripe 23 times in the final quarter. Whiteville made good on 14 of the attempts including five of the last seven in the final 1:12.

The loss ended the season for West Brunswick (13-12) after a fourth-place finish in the Waccamaw Conference.

Whiteville

The methodical spread offense employed by the Trojans kept Whiteville at bay during the first half and early moments of the third quarter before the Wolfpack muscled their way out front for good.

West Brunswick took the early lead 3-0 on a trio of Chris Johnson free throws while the Wolfpack managed its first points with 6:18 to play in the period on Joe Reeves' layup. Reeves scored eight of his 14 points in the opening eight minutes as Whiteville scored the final four points of the quarter for a 12-9 lead.

A 5-0 spurt in the first 2:30 of the second quarter lifted the Wolfpack to a 17-9 advantage that expanded to 25-16 with 3:03 left in the half.

West Brunswick rallied to pull within 27-25 at the half with a 7-0 run in the closing minute. A pair of Ronald Lance baskets and a Chris Johnson jumper and free throw sparked the Trojans surge and left the bigger Wolfpack frustrated at the break.

The Trojans play in the first-half hardly resembled that of a team that lost its first four conference games of the season during a December-January stretch and struggled to stay above the .500 level for much of the year.

Lance's layup to start the third quarter brought the Trojans to 29-28 but it was the closest West Brunswick could get in the final half.

Whiteville then outscored the Trojans 10-2 to take a 39-30 lead and the Wolfpack went on to a 44-33 spread at the end of the quarter.

Heath Hewett scored the only Wolfpack basket in the fourth quarter converting on a three-point play in the opening seconds of the period to give Whiteville a 47-33 lead.

The Wolfpack went to the free throw line 22 more times in the period while hitting on 14 of the attempts and held off a late West Brunswick charge.

Two quick baskets by Chris Johnson and Lance and three minutes to play brought the Trojans within eight—51-43. However, West Brunswick failed to score in the final 2:51 of the game and the Wolfpack ran to their biggest lead at the final buzzer.

Chris Johnson and Donnie Vansteen led West Brunswick with 10 points each while Lance added nine.

Scottie Logan scored 17 points to pace Whiteville and Reeves followed with 14. Chester McGlockton added 11 and Byron Shaw nine to aid the Wolfpack.

Score By Quarters

West Brunswick 9 16 8 10—43
Whiteville 12 15 17 15—59
West Brunswick Scoring: C.Johnson 10, Vansteen 10, Bryant 4,

Bernard 6, Mintz 1, F.Johnson 3, Lance 9, J.Johnson, Timmy Bellamy.

Whiteville Scoring: Shaw 9, Nancy 2, McGlockton 11, Logan 17, Hewett 5, Reeves 14, Gore 1, Thomas, Sink.

East Bladen

West Brunswick defeated East Bladen on the Cougars' court for the second time this season last Thursday as Chris Johnson scored a career-high 33 points to lead the Trojans to a 72-64 semifinal win.

The Trojans had split the two earlier regular-season games winning at Elizabethtown while losing to the Cougars in their league opener in December.

This time around West Brunswick relied on hot free throw shooting (11 of 14) in the final period to take the win after trailing 33-29 at the half.

Although finishing a disappointing sixth in the Waccamaw Conference, East Bladen rallied to advance to the league tournament finals against Whiteville two weeks ago and shocked Capital Area Conference champion Bunn to advance to the sectional semifinals.

The Cougars opened to a 13-6 lead in the first quarter before West Brunswick outscored East Bladen 23-20 in the second period to close to within four points at the half.

The Trojans pulled even with East Bladen in the third quarter, 45-45, then outscored East Bladen 23-20 in the second period to close to within four points at the half.

Julian Johnson added 15 and Ronald Lance 13 to help spark the Trojans.

Michael Coger scored 17 points to lead East Bladen and Roderick Hall followed with 14.

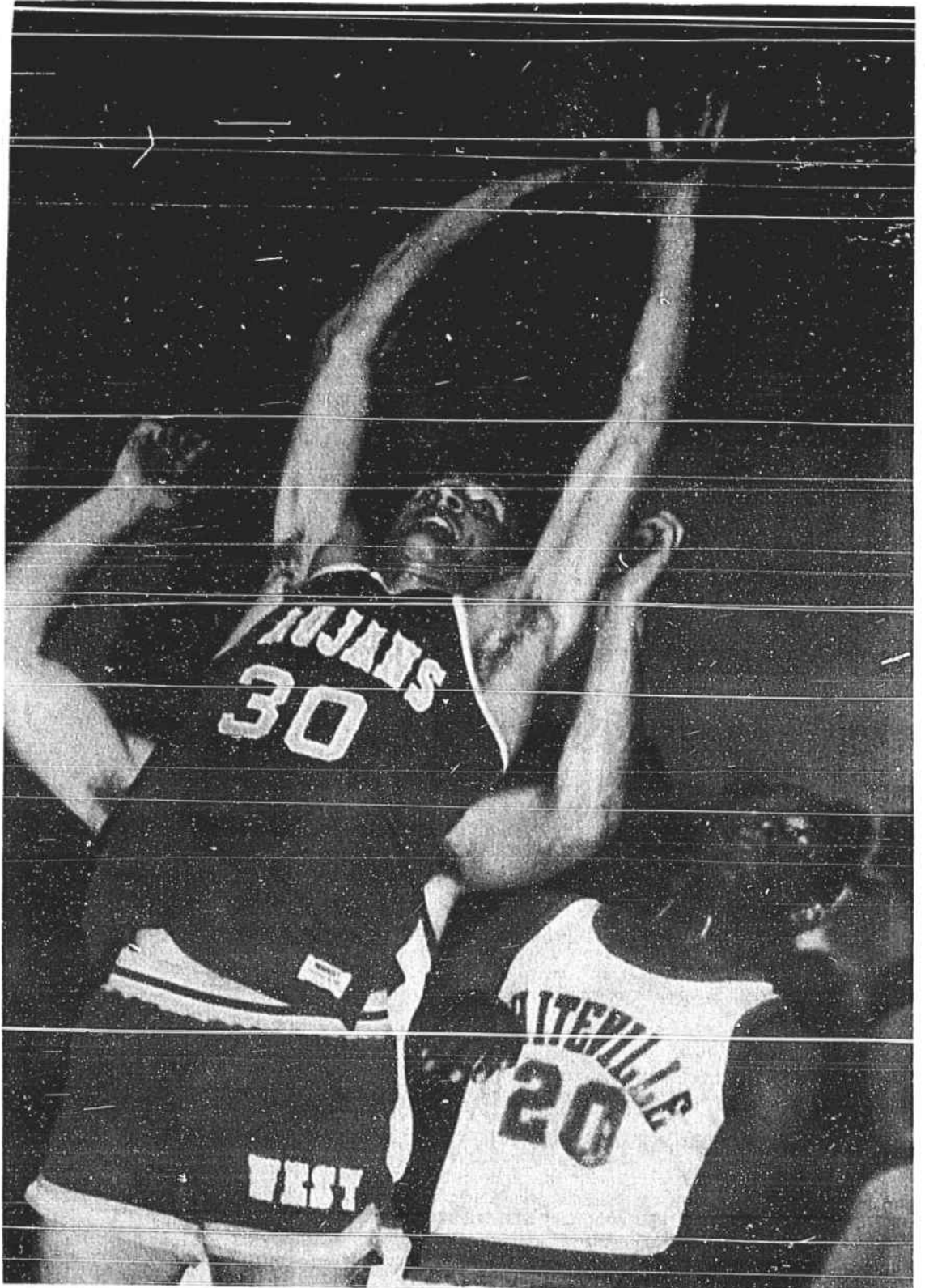
The loss ended the season for East Bladen at 15-11.

Score By Quarters

West Brunswick 6 23 16 27—72
East Bladen 13 20 12 19—64

West Brunswick Scoring: C.Johnson 33, J.Johnson 15, Lance 13, F.Johnson 6, Vansteen 2, Bryant 2, Mintz 1.

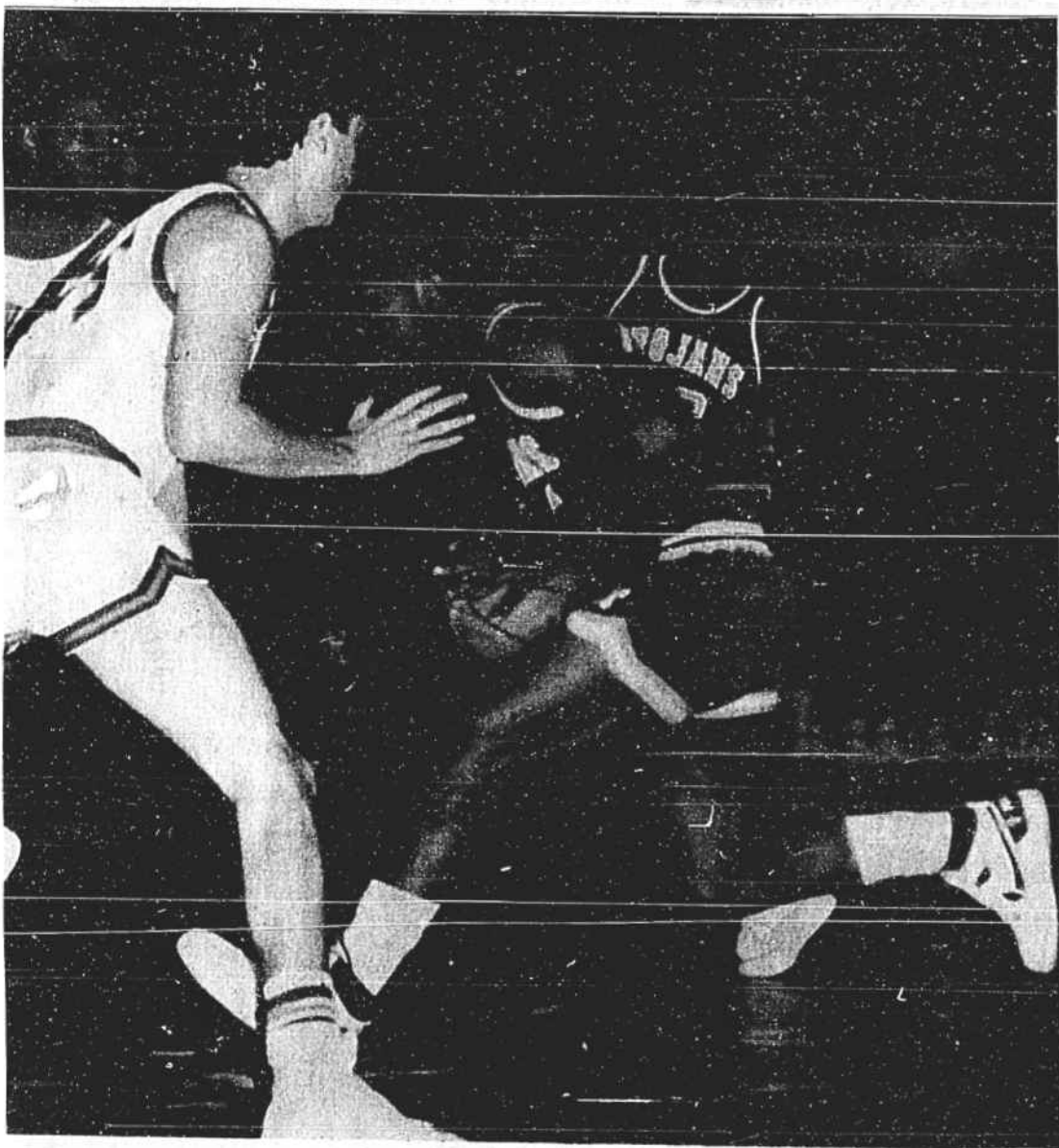
East Bladen Scoring: Coger 17, Hall 14, Creech 9, Campbell 6, King 5, Bryant 6, Cromartie 2, Robinson 1.



STAFF PHOTOS BY JOHNNY CRAIG

MOVE TO THE BASKET—West Brunswick's Donnie Vansteen (30) scores over Scottie Logan (20) of Whiteville in Saturday's 2-A Sectional III championship. Vansteen, along with guard Chris Johnson,

scored 10 points to lead the Trojans but Whiteville went on to win 59-43 and advanced to the eastern regionals in Fayetteville.



JOHNSON DRIVES—Chris Johnson (with ball) drives to the basket in the 2-A Sectional III title game last Saturday. Host Whiteville went on to win 59-43 and ended the season for the Trojans. Defending on the play for

the Wolfpack is Ken Nance (left) while West Brunswick guard Julian Johnson (back) trails the play.

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