

Independence Day Arrives For Cats

For his first trick, he made an elephant disappear while being locked up in a clear tank of boiling water.

For his second trick...

No trick. No lie. New Mulvane High School boys basketball coach made his coaching debut an outstanding one Tuesday night, Dec. 5, in the opening round of the Circle Thunderbird Boys Classic. He coached No. 8 seeded Mulvane to a two-point triumph over No. 1 seeded Independence. The score was 69-67.

"We played a pretty good ball game and I was tickled to death to get a win against a team-line Independence," remarked Barker. "It gives our kids and the program a big shot of confidence. The kids wanted to go out and play somebody to get some respect and they got right after it. Hopefully, this will carry over into future games."

Independence was 20-5 last season and is ranked No. 2 in Class 5A this season. Mulvane was coming off a 2-19 season but it was the Wildcats who took it to the Bulldogs early on. Using a pressure defense, the Cats seemed to catch Indy off-guard and Mulvane took advantage of several turnovers to forge a 17-10 lead after one quarter.

"They made a run at us but they never seemed to fully recover from that early run we had," said Barker. "We got out early on them and picked up some early turnovers. But we did let them stay in the game by going to the line 40 times. We've got to cut down on that."

Mulvane settled into a match-up zone early in the game which kept Independence off balance and enabled Mulvane to use its size advantage. "We felt like we could run the ball up and down the floor with them, which we did, but I didn't want to play them man-to-man after finding out how good their athletes were, so we went with the

match-up zone," said Barker. "It was effective because it forced them to move the ball around and we were able to get a lot of help from one another."

Barker said it also helped that the Bulldogs may have been looking past the Wildcats. After all, Independence has won the Thunderbird Classic the last two years.

Late in the game, Independence finally took the lead, 65-63, with under five minutes to play, but the Wildcats got their game back together and regained the lead on a baseline three-pointer by senior Jeremy Brown. That put Mulvane ahead for good.

"I think our size hurt them," said Barker. "We had quite a few blocked shots. We didn't rebound like I think we can but the size inside kept them arching their shots more."

Starter Brad Canfield (6-foot-7) was the main culprit there. HE blocked six shots and had six points to go with his 12 points. James Baker had five rebounds, 10 points and two assists. Senior Mike Abasolo finished with 10 points, six rebounds and have seven assists.

The big gun offensively was the smallest man, Jeremy Brown, who finished with a game-high 19 points. He also had two steals, three assists and three rebounds.

"We got a lot of good shots because of the transition game," admitted Barker. "We were moving the ball down the court and finding the open man. Most of them were pretty close. We also worked the ball in and got a lot of good shots off some really good picks and screens."

Barker admitted he was a little surprised by the outcome. "Yes, in a way, I was," said the new Cat coach. "I was anxious to see us play and see what we could do. I knew what we could do but you never know what the other team can do."

He's not about to let the Wildcats rest on their laurels, though. "I told the kids afterwards that it was fun to win but they can't ride this," said Barker. "They have to go out and perform every night. We're not the kind of team that has the talent to just walk out and win. We have to work to win and I think they understand that."

The Wildcats will be playing in the semifinal at Circle Friday night, Dec. 8, when they meet up with Andover, which throttled Arkansas City, 81-64, in another opening round game. That game will be at 6:15 p.m. Friday in gym No. 2.

Circle Thunderbird Boys Classic Results

FIRST ROUND

Mulvane	17	26	16	10-69
Independence	10	25	18	14-67

Mulvane—Jeremy Brown 19, Mike Abasolo 10, Darin Erbert 5, Brad Canfield 12, Neil Gosch 5, James Baker 10, Matt Hendren 3, Greg Nunn 2, Luke Cox 3. FG 28 (1), FT 12-25, F 19.

Independence—Jeff Rasnick 12, Jay Alexander 3, Jason Eytchason 10, Casey Stunk 14, Iasco Lawrie 16, Chris Gross 8, Nick Schroeder 3, Tommy Tyler 1. FG 22 (1), FT 22-37, F 19.

Andover 81, Arkansas City 64
 El Dorado 75, Chanute 68
 Circle 52, Wellington 51, OT)

Circle Thunderbird Classic Boys Pairings

Friday, Dec. 8

Game 5 — Independence vs. Arkansas City, gym 2, 6:15 p.m.

Game 6 — Mulvane vs. Andover, gym 1, 6:15

Game 7 — Wellington vs. Chanute, gym 2, 8

Game 8 — Circle vs. El Dorado, gym 1, 8

Saturday, Dec. 9

Game 9 (Seventh Place)—losers of games 5 and 7, gym 1, 11:30 a.m.

Game 10 (Fifth Place)—winners of games 5 and 7, gym 2, 1:15 p.m.

Game 11 (Third Place)—losers of games 6 and 8, gym 1, 5

Game 12 (Championship)—winners of games 6 and 8, gym 1, 9