

Improving Wildcat Play Doesn't Bring Victory

There's a lot of difference between going 3-0 and 0-3 but Mulvane High School basketball coach Dale Landes believes the difference can be measured between the fingertips of his thumb and finger.

"We could have been 3-0 in the tournament," said Landes, who is in his first year at the helm. "We had a chance to win the Circle game. We were up by seven going into the 4th quarter in the Independence game, and we had a 16-point swing against Ark City. The kids showed a lot of determination and brought it back to send the Independence game into overtime but their size took over in overtime."

The Wildcats, now 0-5 for the season heading into a game Tuesday night, Dec. 22, at home against winless Andale, looked good last week in the Circle Thunderbird Boys Classic, but when the dust settled, it was still three losses.

Thursday night, Dec. 17, Mulvane pressed Independence into overtime before the Bulldogs scooted past the Cats, 68-62, in the second pool game in the six-team round robin tournament. In the game for 5th place Saturday, Dec. 19, the Wildcats froze up in the second half as Ark City out-scored Mulvane, 41-25, to pull away to a 68-59 verdict.

Independence won the meet by slamming Andover, 62-50.

"Overall, we had a real competitive tournament," added Landes. "We just came away from it 0-3. All three games, we had the advantage at one time or another during the game, but couldn't hold on. It's not that the kids don't want to win. We make a few

mistakes and it kills us."

Against Ark City's Bulldogs Saturday, the Cats played perhaps their best ball of the year as they rolled out to a 17-9 lead after one period of play, but it was all Ark City after that, especially in the final half. "Their rebounding size really started hurting us in the second half," said Landes. "When you're going up against taller people, you have to have good technique. We knew that. We talked about that at halftime, but we didn't execute in the second half. In the first half, we had good technique and held our own."

Ark City finished with a 32-22 edge in the rebound war against the smaller Wildcats and that was enough to fuel the AC comeback victory.

"In the first quarter, we shot the ball well and we initiated the offense against them," pointed out Landes. "We moved the ball well against their zone and had a good shooting quarter, but we stopped shooting the ball in the second half."

J.J. Dunn was the top scorer for the first time this season as he was in double figures with 10. Center Jason DeWald scored seven points, guard Brian Strack had nine and Steve Nelson scored eight for the Wildcats.

In pool play against Independence, Strack scored a team-high 13 points for Mulvane but there was a whole lot of balance which was critical for the Cats. Guards Nelson and

Jeremy Kendrick each scored nine as did Dunn. Dan Smith finished with eight points and DeWald had six points for MHS.

A three-pointer by Nelson in the last minute tied the game at 56-56 and sent the game into overtime, but Indy went on a 9-3 roll in the extra frame to win it. Nelson also had a "three" to put the Cats up early in the overtime.

"Their press finally got to us," said Landes. "We handled their pressing all night long but in the 4th quarter, they increased their intensity and we couldn't handle it. It just killed us in that quarter."

Landes said he was encouraged by the competitive play by the Wildcats but still a little disappointed. "We could have had a win or two at Circle," said Landes. "We were competitive. People are talking about us. People are impressed, but we haven't been able to get over the hump. Any way you look at it, we're still 0-5."

In the first game of the tourney Monday, Dec. 14, the Wildcats were nudged out by Circle down the stretch, 58-49, in another one overtime game.

Circle Thunderbird Boys Classic Results

FIFTH PLACE

Mulvane	17	12	11	14-57
Arkansas City	9	18	20	21-68
Mulvane—J.J. Dunn 10, Jason DeWald 7, Dan Smith 4, Brian Strack 9, Steve Nelson 8, Larry Dixon 2, Jeremy Kendrick 3, Chris Heersche 3. FG 21-44 (4), FT 8-14, F 19.				

Arkansas City—Matt Bryant 20, Nathan Niles 19, Chris Stewart 7, Matt Brumley 12, Brian Hargrove 6, Rochelle Riley 2, Jason Schwartz 2. FG 25-55 (5), FT 13-18, F 15

CHAMPIONSHIP

Independence 62, Andover 50

THIRD PLACE

Circle 68, Sunrise Academy 57

SECOND ROUND

Independence	14	10	7	28 (9)	68
Mulvane	8	14	16	21 (3)	62
Independence—Jay Alexander 17, Jacob Sasse 13, Kirby Lawrie 15, Jeff King 4, Dustin Meza 5, Chris Thompson 4, Ron Warner 10. FG 26-51 (2), FT 14-21, F 21					

Mulvane—Brian Strack 13, Steve Nelson 9, Jeremy Kendrick 9, Brian Heinrichs 4, J.J. Dunn 9, Dan Smith 8, Jason DeWald 6, Larry Dixon 2, Chris Heersche 2. FG 26-46 (7), FT 3-10, F 23

Andover 62, Arkansas City 56