

By Pastor Vince Carrig

Sports Writer

A critical bounce did not fall the Plainsmen's way and forward Jordan Bailey took charge in the extra session to scratch out a 50-48 overtime win for the Wildcats in Maxwell Friday night.

The narrow margin of victory provided a fitting end to a three-game set in which each team got the better of the other in splitting the first two games.

Had Michael York's shot that bounced twice on the rim fallen toward the net side and not the court side, his Plainsmen would have left with an instant win and avoided the extra 4:00 frame.

"It was just sitting there bouncing... I was thinking it was going to go in—I was hoping it was going to go in—it felt good, but it bounced out. I just really shrugged it off and got ready for overtime," York said of the shot after the game.

Feeling the surge that narrowly escaping a loss gives, Maxwell wasted no time in whipping a seven-point overtime lead onto the scoreboard.

Wildcats guard Sawyer Burke stole the spotlight by jetting the overtime tip-off down a wide-open court to give Maxwell a 38-36 lead. Burke had hit a three pointer from the right corner in the fourth quarter.

Forwards Bailey and Darin Williams awoke in overtime for Maxwell, with each scoring five points and almost half of their game output in the extra time (Bailey finished with 13 and Williams with 11 points).

Not having to quibble for space under the basket with Plainsmen post defenders Kye Kurkowski for the final 6:38 and Michael York for the last 1:29 undoubtedly injected the Maxwell forwards with courage. Referees fouled out both starting Plainsmen posts.

Williams and Bailey converted six of seven free throws in overtime, as the Wildcats coasted with a 49-42 lead.

The visiting Plainsmen, however, refused to don their coats and hats and leave quietly like gentlemen. Instead, they staged a furious comeback, sandwiching two Max Jones line-drive three pointers around Chase Lampmann's shot with his foot on the arc.

Standing at the foul line and trailing by three points (50-47), Perkins County's Nick Turner did his job by hitting the first shot and intentionally glancing the second off the front of the rim. Just as two football teams scuffle for an onside kick, a battle for the loose ball followed with a very real opportunity for the Plainsmen to force double overtime a possibility.

"They competed the whole game. We were down a couple of times: in the fourth quarter we were down eight and in overtime by seven and we battled back to where we had a chance to win the game both times, so that just goes back to show that the kids never stopped playing hard; they play hard until the last horn goes off," Head Coach Shawn Cole said of his Perkins County team.

Wildcats forward Cody Calhoun grabbed the rebound and gained foul shots. Although Calhoun missed both foul shots, the remaining 2.6 seconds only allowed Plainsmen guard Josh Sexson to heave a half-court prayer which fell two feet short of giving Perkins County an unimaginable win.

The Plainsmen trailed for a shade over two quarters during the middle of the game, only to enter a back-and-forth volley in the fourth quarter.

Sexson (10 points) sank the final two free throws of regulation to knot the score at 36-36, and gave Perkins County definite opportunities to ride home with a “W” by stripping Williams of his dribble not once—but twice in the closing minutes.

Fifteen different players scored in the game, but the teams’ leading scorers stepped to the forefront in the second half.

Kye Kurkowski rattled off 10 of his 12 points in the second half. A put-back and turnaround jumper clawed his Plainsmen to within two points of a tie in the fourth quarter.

But Wildcats forward Cody Calhoun alertly drove at the foul-plagued Kurkowski, launching a shot as an afterthought. Referees played along with Calhoun, disqualifying Perkins County’s tall shot blocker as Calhoun’s attempt happened to fall with 2:38 left in the fourth period.

Michael York intercepted a point-to-point Wildcats pass and deposited it to bring his Plainsmen to 29-26, then later had to hit two free throws for a 34-34 tie after crossing Calhoun over and using the glass. Referees claimed Calhoun tagged York (seven points) on the floor and took the bucket off the board.

The close game magnified every player’s contribution as heroic and each miss as crippling. The Plainsmen never see overtime without Erik Hagan’s move to open space and second quarter free throw, or Jeremy Hagan’s finishing a rifled pass from York. Maxwell never makes overtime without reserve Ty Wood’s three second quarter free throws, or if Williams misses just one of the three he received for absorbing contact beyond the arc.

Maxwell missed five free throws in overtime, but Bailey made sure that did not come back to haunt the Wildcats by cutting left-to-right and flicking in a wide-open overtime layup.

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Perkins Co. vs. Maxwell

Perkins Co. 8 10 10 8 12—48

Maxwell 10 13 6 7 14—50