

By Pastor Vince Carrig

Sports Writer □

Kye Kurkowski and Michael York tag-teamed Creek Valley's defense to score 24 and 22 points respectively and propelled their Plainsmen to a 64-57 win Tuesday night (Feb. 9) in Chappell.

Towering over every Storm player by eight inches, Kurkowski affected the outcome more with short-range and mid-range jumpers than by pounding the paint. The Perkins County senior plunged four field goals through from beyond 10 feet and added four free throws.

Frequently working the "give-and-go" with Kurkowski, York whipped into open spaces and skied to the basket. In highlight-reel material, York gathered a rebound in his own lane, flashed down the court, and arrived at the basket with a lightning-fast spin move to give his Plainsmen a 55-43 lead with under 5:00 remaining.

"Michael is playing good basketball right now. All of his offense comes because of his defense," Plainsmen Head Coach Shawn Cole said. "The way he plays and rebounds carries over on the offensive end."

Kurkowski staged a miniature third quarter rally that dissipated the Storm, smash-swatting point guard Jonathan Houser's offering and then swishing an open 12-footer to give Perkins County the lead for good at 30-29. He followed up that effort by drawing Creek Valley center Greg Sherman into his fourth foul, and raining down two free throws on the Storm.

The Storm hustled and drove hard to the basket the entire game, never surrendering despite trailing by seven points at the end of the third quarter and never hovering any closer.

Creek Valley's attack relied heavily on the three pointer, with a staggering 10 of them (for 30 points) swirling through the net. Houser and forward Sam Behrends aimed a remarkable four apiece into the goal.

"It is very difficult for any team to have to guard the deep three and then stop the drive. I thought we did a good job," Coach Cole said.

Houser scored 17, fellow guard Justin Huff 14, and Behrends 12, but the visiting Plainsmen got more support from its bench than the Storm did.

Perkins County relied on Jeremy Hagan's accuracy. Although not striking from beyond the arc, Hagan showed proficiency from just inside it with three jumpers. Hagan also loitered in the lane for an open basket and chalked up nine points.

"We expect [great shooting] from Jeremy. He shoots 'lights-out' in practice all the time. The more he makes, the more teams have to play straight-up on Kye," Coach Cole said.

Once Perkins County got into the Storm's bench, however, Creek Valley suffered through a change in weather patterns. Absent Sherman, Kurkowski found room to roam and took his understudy to school. Absent Sherman, the Storm's two guards and swing forward pulled its offensive attack 20-24 feet from the basket and tried to make a living on long-range shooting.

Huff's three pointer gave the home team its only lead at 10-6, but Hagan quickly made that blow over with back-to-back 16-footers.

Senior guard Nick Turner put back an offensive rebound and funneled in three free throws; fellow senior Max Jones reached the rack with a baffling head fake for the Plainsmen.

Kurkowski blocked four Storm shots, York one.

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Perkins County 14 11 19 20—64

Creek Valley 12 10 15 20—57