By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

Last week's opening weekend for the Longhorn boys' basketball team proved to be a little rough. They dropped their opener at McCook Thursday 43-18. Then, on Friday, they let one get away to Goodland, Kan., 57-49.

Ball handling looked to be one of the big question marks going into the season.

That proved all too true, especially against McCook.

"Their athleticism overwhelmed us in the back court. Most of their points came in transition," Coach Carl Zuege said this week.

Zuege knew the Longhorns would face lots of pressure from McCook.

"We practice against pressure every day, even seven against five. But you can't simulate what McCook brought," he noted.

To their credit, Zuege said the Longhorns likely won't face another team of the athletic caliber McCook has.

In the home opener Friday, the Longhorns got down early, trailing by seven after the first quarter and as many as 16 in the first half.

For some reason, Zuege said his teams have a habit of digging themselves into a hole early.

"That's something that Carl Zuege has to figure out," he said.

He said the Longhorns played well in the second half and pulled to within three down the stretch.

If they played the first half like they did the second half, "we would have won the game," he said.

Zuege said they will continue to work on taking care of the ball. He said the Longhorns have too many possessions where they don't even get a shot off.

It doesn't get a lot easier for the Longhorns this week when they play host to Sidney on Friday, Dec. 12 and then travel to Ogallala on Saturday, Dec. 13.

Sidney returns a big share of their team from last year and Ogallala is perennially tough on the court.

McCook

Ball handling woes affected the Longhorns' ability to get the ball down court Thursday at McCook.

As a result of McCook's pressure, Zuege said he was forced to bring his big men into the back court to help break the press.

That meant they were able to go inside because of their commitment to breaking the press.

McCook played a man-to-man full court pressing defense that intimidated the Longhorns.

McCook held the Longhorns to just five points in the first quarter and eight in the second. Meanwhile, they put up 23 in the first half to lead, 23-13.

The Longhorns' offensive production struggled in the second half, scoring just five points, all

of which came in the third quarter.

Zuege said the defense played well, holding McCook to 20 second-half points in the 18-43 loss.

Imperial 18

	2 PT. FG	3 PT. FG	FT/ FTA	F	TP
Josh Schuman	4	0	0-0	2	4
Kyle Bottom	2	0	0-0	1	2
Matt Hayes	0	0	0-0	1	0
Misael Garcia	0	0	0-0	0	0
Alex Strand	2	3	0-0	3	5
Jakob Burke	0	0	1-2	1	1
Alec Spady	0	0	0-0	0	0
Jeff Banks	0	0	1-2	0	1
Casey Francis	0	0	0-0	1	0
Charlie Haarberg	0	0	0-0	1	0
Daniel Regier	0	0	0-0	0	0
Colin Larson	4	0	1-3	3	5
Daniel Morales	0	0	0-0	1	0
Tanner Stromberger	0	0	0-0	0	0
TOTALS	12	3	3-7	14	18

McCook 43

M. Berry 5, R. Hardin 10, T. Smith 2, A. Larson 2, Z, Wieser 4, C. Larson 4, D. Goltl 9, M. Phemls 3, S. Schaeffer 4.

McCook's totals: 2 pt. FG—30; 3 pt. FG—3; FT/FTA—10-13; Fouls—10; TP—43.

Points by quarters:

Imperial 5 8 5 0—18

McCook 17 6 12 8—43

Goodland

After falling behind 10-2 in the first quarter, the Longhorns managed to pull back within seven, 16-9, at the first quarter break.

Goodland opened the second quarter with a trey and went on a 10-2 run in the first four minutes of the second.

With 40 seconds left in the half, the Longhorns trailed by 16 but managed to cut the deficit to 12 at the halftime break.

Trailing by 15 midway in the third, the Longhorns put together an 11-0 run.

Matt Hayes hit a trey and a deuce, Josh Schuman hit a pair of shots, along with one from Colin Larson, to pull the Longhorns within four, 32-36.

Three treys by Goodland early in the fourth gave them a 13-point, 38-51 lead with five minutes left.

Over the next four minutes the Longhorns put together a 10-0 run to pull within three, 48-51 with 58 seconds left.

The Longhorns were forced to foul and gave up six free throws. This allowed Goodland to reopen the lead and the Longhorns fell 49-57.

Schuman and Larson controlled the inside game against Goodland, scoring 19 and 14 respectively.

No other individual or team stats were available.

Games here Friday against Sidney begin with boys' and girls' jayvee action at 4:30 p.m. MT.

Jayvee play at Ogallala also begins at 4:30 p.m. MT on Saturday.

Imperial 49

	2 PT. FG	3 PT. FG	FT/ FTA	F	TP
Kyle Bottom	1	0	0-0	4	2
Matt Hayes	2	1	0-0	3	7
Alex Strand	0	0	5-7	3	5
Jakob Burke	0	0	0-0	2	0
Alec Spady	0	0	0-0	0	0
Jeff Banks	0	0	0-0	0	0
Casey Francis	0	0	0-0	2	0
Charlie Haarberg	0	0	0-0	0	0
Daniel Regier	0	0	0-0	0	0
Colin Larson	5	0	4-5	5	14
Josh Schuman	9	0	1-5	2	19
Daniel Morales	0	0	0-0	1	0
Alex Sharp	0	0	0-0	2	0
Tanner Stromberger	1	0	0-1	0	2
TOTALS	17	1	10-18	24	49

Goodland, Kan. 57

A. Duell 1, D. Trachsel 2, L. Brenner 3, B. Wilkens 12, B. Rome 7, G. Farris 20, T. Angelos 8, D. Murray 2, R. Conen 2.

Goodland's totals: 2 pt. FG—14; 3 pt. FG—5; FT/FTA—14-27; Fouls—19; TP—57.

Points by quarters:

Imperial	9	10	13	17—49
Goodland	16	15	7	19—57