



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Last weekend the Chase County Longhorns boys basketball team accomplished something that hadn't been since 2003—winning their first two games of the season.

The Longhorns finished the weekend 2-0 with a come-from-behind 52-48 win over Cozad Thursday and a commanding 45-25 win over McCook Friday.

Coach Carl Zuege came away from the weekend liking what he saw in his squad, especially defensively.

Against McCook, the Longhorns held the Bison to just 18 points after three quarters, leading 38-18. At one point early in the fourth quarter, they led 42-18.

He noted McCook's always an athletic team, so to hold them to just 25 was a good defensive start to the season.

Zuege said the key was keeping McCook out of the paint and limiting them to one shot.

He said the Longhorns weren't as strong offensively as he expected. However, they they did enough to come away with a 52-48 win at Cozad.

Zuege's not nervous about the team's offensive production at this point, knowing it will continue to come along.

The Longhorns played without Justus Wallin inside both nights. Zuege said he's having trouble jumping off his feet, due to a suspected injury.

On Friday, the Longhorns played without Travis Luhrs, who got hit by the flu bug. Luhrs contributed eight points against Cozad.

Down by seven to Cozad

Luhrs opened the game against Cozad with back-to-back treys. However Cozad hit six shots from the field along with a pair of free throws to lead 14-10 after one quarter.

The Longhorns matched Cozad in the second with 12 points on two jumpers and three free throws from Jeff Dickey. Still, the Longhorns trailed 22-26 at half.

In the third quarter, Cozad stretched their lead to seven, 39-32.

Zuege said his guys showed their experience and responded at both ends of the court with "enough to get the win."

Offensively, the Longhorns put up 20 points behind eight from Trey Milner and seven from Dickey.

Defensively, they gave up just one basket to Cozad in the final quarter while sending them to the line nine times. There, they made seven.

Dickey led the scoring with 15, followed by 13 from Milner and 10 from Kelton Fisher.

Statistically, the Longhorns shot 61 percent from the floor compared to Cozad's 36 percent. The Longhorns won the battle on the boards with six offensive and 25 defensive rebounds to Cozad's seven and 15.

Fisher led the rebounding with eight, followed by Dickey with six.

Defense holds McCook to 25

McCook struggled offensively against the Longhorn defense, Zuege said the Longhorns sealed off the inside and allowed McCook very few offensive rebounds.

The Longhorns finished 38 percent from the field, going 18-47 overall. They were 3-9 from three-point range.

Fisher hit 50 percent of his shots to lead the team with 19 points. All of his points but one came from two-point range.

He also led the rebounding with seven, followed by Isaac Sorensen with six.

The team went 6-8 at the free throw line, compared to just 9-19 against Cozad.

Sidney, Ogallala this week

Zuege said his team can't let down this weekend when they travel to Sidney Friday and play host to Ogallala Saturday night.

Sidney comes in at 1-2 but those two losses were against Omaha Skutt and Scottsbluff, the 2012 Class B state champion and 2013 state runner-up.

Zuege said Sidney's Lane Harvey may well be one of the best players his team faces this year.

Zuege said the Longhorns can't waste offensive possessions if they expect to be in the game.

Ogallala comes in at 0-2 with losses to 2-0 Lexington and 1-1 Minden.

Zuege said they are a young team that's improving all the time.

Game time at Sidney begins at 4 p.m. MT with jayvee games, followed by girls' and boys' varsity games.

Ogallala jayvee games will begin at 4:30 p.m. MT, followed by girls' and boys' varsity games