

Dragons are dist. champs; advance to Regionals

Written by April Peregoy



Earning the title of district champion, the Holyoke Dragon basketball team beat the Akron Rams, 48-35, at the Northeastern Junior College campus in Sterling on Saturday, Feb. 28.

Winning the district championship also means the boys will advance to the Region 2 tournament Friday and Saturday, March 6-7 to be held at Sterling High School. There, they will take on Front Range Christian at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday for their first game of the tournament.

For coach John Baumgartner, the victory on Saturday was his sixth district championship win in the last seven years. "It feels good to be district champs," said the coach. "It was definitely a good week for us."

To get to the championship game on Saturday, the varsity team had to first defeat two other challengers. Hosting the first round of district play on Tuesday, Feb. 24, the Dragons thumped Merino, 70-26. They then traveled to the NJC campus in Sterling on Thursday, Feb. 26, to beat Frontier Academy in semifinal action, 65-53.

Holyoke 70, Merino 26

Tuesday night's game pitting Holyoke against Merino can only be described as a blowout by the Dragons. "What can I say?" said coach Baumgartner, "The boys came out with intensity and we were able to get everybody in the game and everyone scored."

To the team, however, the game was somewhat bittersweet, especially for the seniors who knew it was their last home game of the season. "It was a fun last game in Holyoke," said the coach, "and we realized we are really going to miss all those supporters for the rest of the season."

With Holyoke ahead 31-2 after the first quarter and 48-8 at the half, the starters played only 12 minutes of the entire game during the first half. Kyle Carper and Austin Tharp together earned 21 points in the first period. That includes the slam dunk made by Carper after making a break from the other end of the court.

Other players came off the bench in the second half for some district playing time and a shot to have their names entered in the stats. Freshman Reid Baumgartner earned eight points in

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the third, six of which came from behind the arc, and Willie Greenman put up half of the Dragons' eight points in the fourth.

Already leading by 40 points after the first two quarters, HHS continued to extend the edge slightly in the second half to beat Merino by 44.

Carper and Tharp were in double digits with 19 and 14 points, respectively. In rebounding, Carper and Brian DeBoer topped the stats with seven each while Tharp had six. Ryan Baumgartner stole five balls and passed five assists.

As a team, Holyoke shot well in the first half, making 21 of 32 shots for a 66 percent average. That dropped some in the second half, earning the team a 52 percent shooting average for the entire game. The team also shot 71 percent from the free-throw line.

Holyoke 70, Merino 26

	2	3	FT	F	TP	
						FG
Tharp	4	2	0-0	0	14	
Baumgartner	2	0	0-0	0	4	
Carper	9	0	1-1	2	19	
Wailles	1	0	1-1	0	3	
Swanson	0	0	1-2	3	1	
Brown	1	0	0-0	0	2	
Krueger	0	1	0-0	0	3	
DeBoer	1	0	0-0	3	2	
King	2	0	2-2	1	6	
Reid Baum.	1	2	0-1	1	8	
Fricke	2	0	0-0	3	4	
Greenman	2	0	0-0	0	4	
TEAM	25	5	5-7	13	70	
Merino						
TEAM	10	0	6-12	7	26	
Scoring By Quarters						
Holyoke	31	17	14	8	--70	
Merino	2	6	11	7	--26	

Holyoke 65, Frontier Acad. 53

For the first time this season, the boys' varsity team met Frontier Academy on the NJC court in Sterling on Thursday.

"Frontier has good athletes and shooters," said Baumgartner, adding the team usually averages 70 points a game. "We held them to only 53," he noted.

Taking hold of an early lead, the Dragons continued to stay one step ahead of their opponents throughout the game. A five-point advantage at the end of the first quarter turned into a nine-point one at halftime, with the score 32-23.

Even the threat of foul trouble couldn't stop the team, according to Baumgartner. "Those coming off the bench did a good job of sustaining the lead," he said.

The third quarter turned out to be the only one in which Frontier outscored Holyoke, though it was only by one point and HHS still had an eight-point lead heading into the fourth.

It turned out foul trouble was more of a threat for the Wolverines, who had three players foul out in the final period. Holyoke shot a total 24 free throws, half of which found their way to the

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basket.

“I was a little disappointed with our free throw shooting,” said Baumgartner. “We’re going to work on that for the regional tournament.”

Still, it was enough for the Dragons to maintain a 12-point lead and ensure they would play at the district championship on Saturday.

Carper and Tharp led the team with 21 points and 10 rebounds each. Michal Brown also did well, making eight points and seven rebounds.



Holyoke’s overall rebounding stats were impressive, with the team bringing down 40. The Wolverines had only 26.

As for shooting percentages, Holyoke maintained an even 50 percent average for the whole game, while Frontier had 39 percent overall. The Wolverines performed better at the free-throw line, however, with a 75 percent average, while HHS shot at 55 percent.

Holyoke 65, Frontier Academy 53

	2	3	FT	F	TP	
						FG
Tharp	7	0	7-12	0	21	
Baumgartner	0	1	3-7	3	6	
Carper	8	0	5-7	3	21	
Wailes	2	0	0-1	2	4	
Swanson	0	1	1-2	0	4	
Brown	4	0	0-0	3	8	
Krueger	0	0	1-2	4	1	
TEAM	21	2	17-31	15	65	
Frontier Academy						
TEAM	16	3	12-16	24	53	
Scoring By Quarters						
Holyoke	13	19	13	20	--65	
Frontier Acad.	8	15	12	18	--53	

Holyoke 48, Akron 35

“It’s never easy beating someone three times in a season,” said Baumgartner, but that’s exactly what the Dragons did when they took on the Akron Rams for the district championship on Saturday.

Having played the Rams twice already, Baumgartner knew Akron has a good, solid ball club.

However, the Dragons had Carper on their team, who played one of his best games of the season. “He was too tough for them to stop,” praised his coach.

Holyoke was fired up for Saturday’s game, and it showed in the first quarter as the team hit four three-pointers right away. This gave the Dragons a nice 12-point lead at the end of the first eight minutes.

“Those three-pointers gave us a good start,” said Baumgartner, pointing out that for the rest of the game, quarter scoring was pretty close.

“It wasn’t our best game offensively,” the coach added. “We didn’t execute our plays the way

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I would have liked—but we didn't turn over the ball either. We took good care of it.”

It's true that after the first quarter, it wasn't a high-scoring game for either team. Yet Holyoke maintained the lead throughout. At halftime, the scoreboard read 28-15. The Rams outscored HHS in the second half, but it was not enough to overcome the advantage the Dragons gained in the first quarter, and Holyoke took the 13-point game.

Carper dominated the stats lists, scoring 22 points and rebounding 15 balls. Tharp also earned double digits with 12 points.

Holyoke made 19 of 45 attempts at the basket, giving them a 42 percent shooting average for the game. Akron was 14 for 40 for 35 percent.

HHS also outrebounded the Rams, 37-18, and made seven steals to Akron's two.

Holyoke 48, Akron 35

	2	3	FT	F	TP	
						FG
Tharp	1	2	4-5	2	12	
Baumgartner	1	1	0-0	1	5	
Carper	10	0	2-3	3	22	
Wailes	0	0	0-1	0	0	
Swanson	1	1	0-0	1	5	
Brown	2	0	0-0	2	4	
TEAM	15	4	6-9	9	48	
Akron						
TEAM	11	3	4-7	13	35	
Scoring By Quarters						
Holyoke	20	8	9	11	--48	
Akron	8	7	7	13	--35	