

Herald Palladium – 12/23/05

Bees not perfect, but good enough

Bridgman defeats River Valley despite sluggish spurts

By JASON MITCHELL

H-PSports Editor

BRIDGMAN — Coach Mike Miller's hunt for 32 intense minutes of play out of his Bridgman basketball team continues.

On Thursday, 30 minutes or so were good enough to thump River Valley 72-43 in a Lakeland Conference game.

Zac Nemitz came off the bench to score a game-high 23 points, 21 of which came off seven 3- pointers. But the first two minutes of that second half, a two minutes that featured lackadaisical effort and sluggishness on the Bees' part, stuck in Miller's mind.

"I don't think we've played hard for 32 minutes all season," said Miller, whose Bees are now 4-0 and 3-0 in league play. "We talked at the half about coming out and playing hard, but we didn't." River Valley (1-2, 2-3) was without guard Chad Kuntz, who suffered a concussion during the Mustangs' loss to Berrien Springs last week. It was the first game River Valley had played this season without Kuntz.

"We were tentative; it's different when you lose your point guard," River Valley coach Casey Caid said. "Everything was out of sync and we just couldn't get the offense going." Caid said he hopes Kuntz will be back for the Mustangs' Jan. 6 game at Edwardsburg.

Bridgman didn't play its best game either Thursday, missing several first-quarter shots. But the timely shooting of Nemitz, **forward Dan Kunde's floor game** and a seven-point burst by forward Nick Sweet pushed Bridgman to a 32-17 halftime lead.

Center Craig Mc Nees' dunk wasn't bad, either.

River Valley did outrebound Bridgman 39-29. That irritated Miller, too.

"How many offensive rebounds did we have?" Miller asked. "We've got to do a better job on the offensive boards." Bridgman had just four offensive rebounds, but the Bees shot 47 percent (30 of 63). The Bees led 51-34 starting the fourth quarter, and a 9-0 run quickly put to rest any ideas of a Mustang comeback.

Kunde had 14 points and Mc Nees had 13 for Bridgman. But Nemitz was the offensive leader for the Bees.

"He's been giving us that spark off the bench," Miller said.

Nemitz scored 20 points in the Bees' victory over Edwardsburg last week.

Guard Caleb Dryden's 17 points paced River Valley. He also had seven rebounds. Center Nate Swords had 13 points.

It was the two schools' informal Christmas game. Miller said the two schools have played a basketball game on the Tuesday or Thursday around Christmastime for several years.

"It's a good game for alumni to come back and see," Miller said. "And these kids all know each other. The schools are so close together." Bridgman will host a basketball tournament next week. The host Bees will take on Decatur at 8 p.m. Tuesday. The opener will feature New Buffalo and Saugatuck. Championship and consolation games will be on Thursday.

BRIDGMAN 72, RIVER VALLEY 43
At Bridgman

RIVER VALLEY (43): Caleb Dryden 5 5-7 17, Jeremy Schaeffer 1 0-2 2, Chad Kuntz 0 0-0 0, Andrew White 3 0-1 6, Matt Grandholm 1 0-0 2, Chris Leidolf 1 0-0 3, Andy Priest 0 0-0 0, Stephen Bashore 0 0-0 0, Jimmy Francis 0 0-0 0, David Lantis 0 0-0 0, Ricky Zeiger 0 0-0 0, Nate Swords 5 3-3 13. TOTALS: 16 8-13 43.

BRIDGMAN (72): Dan Kunde 7 0-2 14, Craig McNeas 6 1-2 13, Todd Hendricks 0 0-0 0, Dan Ponegalek 3 0-0 7, Nick Sweet 4 0-0 9, Jon Malm 0 0-0 0, Zach Welsher 0 0-0 0, Zac Nemitz 7 2-2 23, Seth Coffing 2 0-0 4, Boo Ott 0 0-0 0, Blake Ivers 0 0-0 0, Casey Burli 0 0-0 0, Pat Kading 1 0-0 2. TOTALS: 30 3-6 72.

River Valley	9	17	34	43
Bridgman	14	32	51	72

3-point goals: Bridgman 9 (Nemitz 7, Sweet, Ponegalek) River Valley 3 (Dryden 2, Leidolf). Total fouls (fouled out): Bridgman 15 (none), River Valley 8 (none).

J.V. score: Bridgman 41, River Valley 35. Varsity records: Bridgman 4-0 (3-0 Lakeland), River Valley 2-3 (1-2 Lakeland). Officials: Mike Hinga, Dave Buck, Bruce Arter.

'Zac attack' lifts Bees over Mustangs

By David Johnson, News editor, Harbor Country News

BRIDGMAN - The River Valley varsity basketball team was the latest victim of a "Zac attack" on Thursday, Dec. 22.

Bridgman's Zac Nemitz buried seven three-point baskets - five of them at crucial times - to power the Bees to a 72-43 Lakeland Conference win.

"I'm kind of on a hot streak lately - they're all going in," the junior said.

Nemitz couldn't have done it alone, but his torrid shooting from three-point land opened up the inside game, and teammates Dan Kunde and Craig McNees both reached double figures to help the home team prevail.

"Zac's an amazing shooter, and when he's out there it just opens up the inside for us," Kunde noted. "He's not a selfish player - he gets to the post players real well."

Kunde got Bridgman rolling by scoring the game's first four points. Caleb Dryden cut the early margin in half with a hoop, but Nemitz answered at the 3:18 mark of the first quarter with his first trey of the evening. He was on the mark again less than a minute later, and the Bee lead was already up to eight points (10-2).

The Mustangs battled back via Dryden's turn-around jumper, a Nate Swords bucket and Swords' subsequent three-point play to trail by just three (12-9).

Bridgman responded with a fusillade of three-pointers. Nemitz opened the second stanza with his third □□," Dan Ponegalek got into the act a few minutes later, and Nemitz was at it again with 4:40 showing on the clock to open up a 23-11 advantage. McNees then slammed down a crowd-pleasing dunk, and the Bees seemed to have cornered the market on momentum.

McNees later said he thought it was Bridgman's best team performance of the season so far.

"We swung the ball, hit the open man, no one was selfish," he said.

River Valley managed to pull within 10 points (27-17) thanks to baskets by Jeremy Schaeffer and Dryden, but Bridgman's Nick Sweet tallied the last five points of the first half (on a three-pointer and an offensive board and put-back) to leave the score 32-17 at intermission.

The Mustangs made on last run, again whittling the lead down to 10 (38-28), but Sweet's offensive rebound and basket followed by - what else? - a Nemitz trey, quickly reestablished a 15-point margin.

Nemitz beat the third-quarter buzzer with his sixth three-point basket to open up a 51-34 advantage heading into the final 8:00. He would make one more (with 6:19 left in the contest) to equal his output in Bridgman's Dec. 16 victory at Edwardsburg.

Kunde tallied six fourth-period points as the Bee out-scored Valley 21-9 in the fourth quarter.

Nemitz also sank a pair of free throws during the final period to finish with a game-high 23 points. Kunde scored 14 points, McNees totaled 13 points, Sweet had 7 points and 4 assists, and Todd Hendricks also dished out four assists.

“I think we did a really nice job of passing the ball and screening and running our offensive sets,” said Bridgman coach Mike Miller. “I also think we did a good job on our press tonight for the first time this season, and that made a big difference in the game.”

Dryden led the Mustangs (2-3 overall, 1-2 Lakeland) with 17 points. Swords added 13 points.

The Mustangs were without senior point guard Chad Kuntz, who suffered a concussion during the Dec. 16 game against Berrien Springs.

River Valley coach Casey Caid said he's hoping to have Kuntz back in the line-up on Jan. 6 when the Mustangs face Edwardsburg.

Caid also noted that the Mustangs battled hard, but the Bees seemed to always have an answer.

“They played a great game, and we weren't sharp offensively a lot of the time - made too many turnovers - and that hurts you against a good team,” he said.