

Bees eclipse Comets to tighten grip on Lakeland lead

By David Johnson, News editor – Harbor Country News

COLOMA - The Bridgman High School varsity basketball team played one of its best games of the year in one of its biggest games of the year.

The Bees rolled to a 63-50 victory at Coloma on Friday, Jan. 20, to solidify their lead in the Lakeland Conference.

Bridgman's stifling defensive pressure held the host Comets to just 13 first-half points while sophomore Nick Sweet ended up pouring in a game-high 30 points to pace the Bees on the other side of the court.

"It was a great team win," Sweet said. "Everyone did their part and played a good game the whole time - all of us."

Coloma built an early 4-2 margin on scores by Tyler La Vanway and Erving Warren, but a pair of Sweet free throws, **Dan Kunde's tip-in, and an offensive rebound** and put-back by Sweet vaulted Bridgman on top 8-4. Sweet's three-point bucket at the 1:04 mark of the opening stanza opened up a 12-5 advantage.

The Bees got back-to-back-to-back treys from Sweet, Zac Nemitz and Sweet again in quarter number two to bury the Comets under a 21-7 avalanche.

Sweet saved his fourth connection from the three-point zone for the late moments of the second period, and that shot left the halftime score 29-13 in Bridgman's favor.

Kunde knocked down a jumper to start the third quarter, and Sweet soon followed with three-pointer number five as the Bee lead ballooned all the way up to 21 points (34-13). It would peak at 22 points (44-22) at the 2:01 mark of the third, thanks to a three-point play by Nemitz.

Coloma made a valiant, but ultimately futile run in the fourth period.

La Vanway tallied five points as the Comets began the final period on a 7-2 run. A Spencer Paulsen trey and Joe Stonebreaker's 2-for-2 trip to the foul line at the 4:29 mark pulled Coloma within 12 points of the Bees (52-40). **The Bees were playing without Kunde at this point - he suffered an apparent twisted ankle late in the third stanza. But the senior returned to the floor while Stonebreaker was at the charity stripe.**

Todd Hendricks, Sweet and Dan Ponegalek proceeded to make their free throws. Those six points plus the two Sweet dropped in on a drive to the hoop with 2:46 remaining in the game kept Bridgman safely out of reach

Sweet pulled down 10 rebounds to go with his 30-point performance. But it was his defensive assignment against the Comets' top scorer that may have meant the most.

"My first job out there tonight was to stop (Tyler) La Vanway," Sweet said. "Then we started swinging the ball and I got good looks, so I took 'em."

La Vanway was limited to 11 points, and Bridgman coach Mike Miller was quick to point out that just six of those points were scored when Sweet was guarding the senior guard.

“That’s outstanding, because that kid’s a good scorer,” he said.

Kunde finished one assist short of a triple-double with 12 points, 10 boards and 9 dishes.

He noted that all those assists came down to making lemonade out of some lemons.

“I wasn’t shooting too well - they were gunning for me,” Kunde said. “When I drove, it opened other people up and I just got it to the open guy.”

And often that open guy was Nick Sweet.

As Hendricks later put it, “We finally had somebody who was on, and we gave him the ball as much as we could.”

Miller said the Bees were characteristically unselfish on offense, and also managed to string together three straight periods of outstanding defense.

“To be up 48-27 on the road against a good team like that, I’m very proud of our effort for three quarters,” he said.

Miller added, however, that the defensive winning streak ended in the fourth stanza as Coloma poured in 23 points.

Craig McNeas finished with 7 points while Nemitz added 6 for Bridgman.

La Vanway and Jeff Gargano scored 11 points apiece for the Comets (4-2 Lakeland Conference, 6-5 overall after the game).

The Bees owned the boards by a 28-17 margin.

How Sweet it is for Bees

Bridgman star scores 30 in victory over Coloma.

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Nick Sweet scored 30 points to lead No. 6 Class C Bridgman past Coloma, 63-50, Friday night in Lakeland Conference boys basketball action Friday night. Dan Kunde added 12 for the visiting Bees (9-0, LAC 5-0).

Tyler LaVanway and Jeff Gargano each had 11 to lead the Coloma (6-5, LAC 4-2) scoring.

BRIDGMAN (63): Dan Kunde, 5 2-4 12, Craig McNees 1 5-6 7, Todd Hendricks 0 4-4 4, Dan Ponegalek 0 2-3 2, Nick Sweet 9 7-11 30, Jon Malm 0 0-0 0, Zach Welsher 0 0-0 0, Zac Nemitz 1 0-0 2. TOTALS: 18 21-28 63 .

COLOMA (50): Tyler LaVanway 4 1-2 11, Erving Warren 2 1-2 5, Jeff Gargano 2 7-9 11, Kasey Weber 0 0-0 0, Brian Saltzman 1 1-2 3, Rickey Fischer 2 2-2 6, Spencer Paulsen 4 0-0 10, Joe Richardson 0 4-5 4. TOTALS: 15 16-22 50.

Bridgman	12	29	48	63
Coloma	5	13	27	50

3-point goals: (not available). Total fouls (fouled out): Bridgman 20 (none), Coloma 21 (Fisher). Varsity records: Bridgman 9-0, LAC 5-0, Coloma 6-5, LAC 4-2

Sweet victory: Bees stay undefeated

Bridgman remains atop Lakeland standings

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

By DARREN PHILLIPS - HPSports Writer

COLOMA — Junior forward Nick Sweet compiled an impressive offensive stat line in Bridgman’s 63-50 Lakeland Conference win over Coloma Friday night. What most impressed Bridgman coach Mike Miller, however, was Sweet’s defense. Sweet led the Bees with 30 points, including five 3pointers, and also had the defensive assignment of guarding Coloma scoring leader Tyler La Vanway. “Nick Sweet did an outstanding job on Tyler La Vanway,” Miller said. “When Nick was guarding Tyler La Vanway, he had six points. That’s amazing, because that kid is a scorer. Nick Sweet won the game for us on the defensive end.” On offense, Sweet’s touch from 3point range helped Bridgman (5-0 Lakeland, 9-0) pull away. He hit his first 3pointer late in the first quarter to give the Bees a 125 lead. Sweet hit three more from beyond the arc in the second quarter and another early in the third quarter that pushed Bridgman’s lead to 21 at 34-13. He finished 9 of 14 from the field, including 5 of 7 on 3-pointers, and 7 of 11 from the free throw line.

“Our strength on offense is we pass the ball well, we’re unselfish and the open man takes the shot,” Miller said. “Nick Sweet was the open guy tonight.” Bridgman, ranked No. 6 in Class C, took its biggest lead at 48-25 late in the third quarter. Coloma (42, 65) answered with a basket by Rickey Fischer and scored on its first six possessions of the fourth quarter. That run, capped by two free throws by Joe Richardson with 4:29 to play, cut the lead to 12 at 52-40. The Comets never cut the lead to single digits. Coloma scored 37 points in the second half after a first half in which the Comets committed 13 turnovers and shot 25 percent from the field. “In the first half, for some reason we didn’t match their intensity,” said Coloma coach Brent Nate. “We turned the ball over 13 times and I think we missed five lay-ups.” Coloma was 11 of 21 from the field in the second half after going 4 of 16 in the first two quarters. La Vanway and Jeff Gargano each scored 11 points and Spencer Paulsen had 10 for the Comets. Bridgman had a 28-20 rebounding advantage, led by nine each for Dan Kunde and Sweet. Kunde also had 12 points and nine assists. He scored eight points in the third quarter before falling hard to the court after grabbing a rebound late in the period. Kunde limped off the court but returned to action midway through the fourth quarter.

Bridgman 63 Coloma 50.