Bees lock up Lakeland, quiet critics

JACK WALKDEN – South Bend Tribune Staff Writer

BUCHANAN -- Three years ago when Bridgman joined the Lakeland Conference, some said the Bees would have trouble competing.

The Bees have definitely proved the so-called experts wrong in boys basketball.

Mike Miller's team wrapped up its second straight outright Lakeland Conference title with a 47-37 victory over Buchanan before a near-capacity crowd here Friday night.

Bridgman ran its Lakeland winning streak to 21 straight and improved its three-year record in the conference to a superb 37-4. What makes that record even more impressive is the fact that **Bridgman has just one senior on the team**.

"Awesome," Miller beamed about the second straight championship. "The Lakeland Conference is full of good coaches and good athletes. And to come in here and win two titles in three years is awesome. I don't think what some people were saying about us bothered the coaching staff because we knew we had a pretty good team. But I think, because of what some were saying about us, the kids came in with a chip on their shoulder. I think it motivated them and made them work that much harder in the off-season. Conference championships take four or five months of hard effort. And these kids deserve a lot of credit."

The fifth-ranked Bees, 13-0 in the league and 18-1 overall, took control of Friday's game during a three-minute stretch in the second quarter.

Leading just 13-12, Bridgman took advantage of Buchanan turnovers and offensive rebounding to go on an 11-2 run. That put Miller's team up 24-14. The Bucks never got closer than seven after that.

"I'd like to take back those three minutes," Buchanan coach Reid McBeth said. "We didn't want to run up and down the floor with them. In their transition game, Bridgman can hurt you because they can rebound and hit 3s in transition. We wanted to make every possession as valuable as possible and get something positive. During that stretch we got away from that. I'm very proud of the way we played. We executed the way we wanted to for the most part. But for us to beat a team like Bridgman, we have to execute and get shots to fall. That didn't happen consistently enough."

For the game, Buchanan finished with 16 turnovers and Bridgman used them to score 19 easy points.

Bridgman's Dan Kunde, the lone senior, who at 6-7 was four inches taller than any Buchanan player, hurt the Bucks both inside and outside. He hit a trio of 3-pointers and during a stretch of the third quarter was unstoppable inside. Kunde finished with a game-high 16 points.

Center Craig McNees, who's 6-5, was also tough inside and finished with 12 points and seven rebounds. Guard Todd Hendricks chipped in seven points, seven assists and five steals, and guard Dan Ponegalek also grabbed seven rebounds.

Buchanan (7-6, 9-10) had forward Marquis Hall with 10 points, eight rebounds and three steals.

BRIDGMAN 47, BUCHANAN 37

At Buchanan

BRIDGMAN (47): **Dan Kunde 6 1-3 16**, Craig McNees 5 2-3 12, Todd Hendricks 1 4-4 7, Dan Ponegalek 2 1-1 5, Nick Sweet 2 0-0 4, Zach Welsher 0 0-0 0, Zac Nemitz 1 0-0 3. TOTALS: 17 8-11 47.

BUCHANAN (37): Damian Bryant 1 0-0 2, Eric Cole 2 0-0 5, Marquis Hall 4 2-3 10, Taylor Johnson 1 0-0 2, Jeff Kyles 4 0-1 8, Avery Brown 2 0-0 6, Terrill Tucker 2 0-0 4. TOTALS: 16 2-4 37.

Bridgman	9	24	36	47
Buchanan	9	17	23	37

3-point goals: Bridmgan 5 (Kunde 3, Nemitz 1, Hendricks 1), Buchanan 3 (Brown 2, Cole 1). Total fouls (fouled out): Bridgman 10, Buchanan 17. Field goal shooting: Bridgman 17 for 39 (44 percent), Buchanan 16 for 36 (44 percent). Rebounding: Bridgman 26 (Ponegalek 7, McNees 7), Buchanan 20 (Hall 8). Turnovers: Bridmgan 13, Buchanan 16. J.V. score: Bridgman 52, Buchanan 48. Varsity records: Bridgman 18-1 (13-0 Lakeland Conference), Buchanan 9-10 (7-6 Lakeland Conference).

Bridgman takes 2nd straight Lakeland crown

By H-PSTAFF

Bridgman used an 11-2 run midway through the second quarter to open up a small lead against Buchanan during Friday's basketball game.

The lead held up the rest of the game as the Bees clinched their second consecutive Lakeland Conference title with a 47-37 victory.

The Bees (13-0 Lakeland, 18-1) have won 21 straight conference games since a 52-49 loss to the Bucks (7-6, 9-10) on Jan. 21, 2005.

Buchanan tried to slow the pace of the game down and prevent the Bees from getting their transition game going, **but the Bucks could not contain Dan Kunde, who finished with a game-high 16 points.** Marquis Hall led Buchanan with 10 points.