

White Station's LeRon Black and Davell Roby start fast in MIAA Jamboree

Also, East edges Ridgeway in 20-minute exhibition

By Pete Wickham

Thursday, November 17, 2011

It's way too small a sample size. But after Wednesday night's MIAA basketball jamboree at Ridgeway, it appears that the rebranding of the LeRon Black-Davell Roby White Station franchise is well underway, while a loaded host Roadrunner squad has some work ahead of it after a quick slap by a rising East squad.

The two sophomores -- Black and Roby -- both bigger and stronger, dominated both ends of the floor while the Spartans cruised past Overton, 30-20, in their 20-minute segment. The power moves, the slick passes were all there. There were a few issues as the Spartans try to install a more uptempo game. But the two mainstays have stepped up their game.

"The coaches have told us we need to be more assertive," Roby said.

As for the pace, Black said, "We were all bigs last year (Nino Johnson and Marvin Williams teaming with Andre Hollins). This year we're smaller, so we have to move faster).

Ridgeway has made some national polls because of a veteran returning lineup, bolstered by 6-7 transfer Craig Hill from Cordova. But East, in its first action under new coach Sam Bachelor, took the fight quickly to the Roadrunners behind juniors Nick King and Matthew Butler and senior Earvin Morris. They took advantage of some too-quick shooting and mistakes by Ridgeway to clinch a 31-29 edge on a basket by 6-5 freshman Keelon Lawson in the final minute.

"It's a matter of dedication and commitment how far we go, but we want to show we can compete with the best," King said.

"There's a long road ahead, and a lot of work to do," Bachelor said. "But this gives the guys a taste of what can happen."

Ridgeway coach Wes Henning, when asked if his team is one of those in the mix to keep the state AAA title in the neighborhood, said "We're a long way from even thinking

about it, let along talking about it. Tonight only the bench showed me something. I wasn't happy."

Central girls coach Niki Bray, her team fresh off an emotional run to the AAA title last year, said the focus had remained good through the first two weeks of practice. And the Warriors, despite not using LSU-bound senior Danielle Ballard for the exhibition, appeared to show their usual brand of defensive mayhem in a 27-13 rout of Manassas, led by Georgia Tech signee Aaliyah Whiteside.

But Bray was not happy with the effort. "We seemed to forget everything we worked on for two weeks on defense. We haven't even gotten to offense yet," she said.

Overton's girls, who have been to the state tournament the past three years, think they may have found a big piece of their puzzle with the arrival of junior Kelsey Briggs, the star of the Lady Wolverines' 27-11 rout of a rebuilding White Station team.

"She's a big guard who can drive to the basket, but also hit threes. She's a big addition to a team that basically came back this year intact," Overton coach Lynn Smith said.

Cordova's boys, playing for the first time without Hill, got past Kingsbury with 6-5 sophomore Salonn Heath showing well in the paint though he has had limited practice since finishing football.

Central's boys doubled up Manassas, 35-18, as 6-6 Frank Herron and 6-7 D'Arrius Sorrell take up the slack left by Jarnell Stokes' odyssey to Southwind.

"We have to keep working to move forward, but I like this group so far. They're giving the effort I want to see," Warriors coach Andre Applewhite said.

The MIAA's second Jamboree is set to start at 3 this afternoon at Hamilton. Defending state AAA boys champ Craigmont and 2010 state champ Melrose are the featured squads at 6:40 and 7:20.

