

By JOHN HENSON

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HINDMAN — If the Harlan County Black Bears had forgotten what it feels like to lose a tournament game on a last-second shot, the Hazard Bulldogs and Josh Hollan provided a painful reminder Tuesday in the opening round of the WYMT Classic.

With the score tied and three seconds left, Hollan drove through the Harlan County defense for an open 3-pointer from the top of the key to send Hazard to the semifinals with a 59-56 victory.

The ending was eerily similar to last year's 13th Region Tournament when Clay County's John Vernon Hooker took the ball the length of the court for a game-winning basket.

"One of these days I hope we won't be afraid to guard somebody at the end of the game," Harlan County coach Mike Jones said. "(Assistant coach Michael Jones) told them in the huddle not to let this be another Clay County, don't be afraid to guard. We were. We backed up and was afraid to guard. We put a safety back there to help. We told them not to let No. 33 get the ball, and he dribbled right past one of our guys."

Hollan and Matt Thompson, Hazard's sophomore guards, scored 16 and 13 points, respectively, to lead the 9-6 Bulldogs.

Harlan County (12-2) was led by junior guard Chad Massingill with 19 points. Alex Sergent and Aaron Caldwell added 11 and 10 points, respectively.

Hazard played well early in the game of runs and executed down the stretch after it appeared Harlan County had taken control after outscoring the Bulldogs 25-8.

Hazard dominated the first half, building a 13-point lead by the break as the Bears struggled against the Bulldogs' 2-3 zone. Hazard forced numerous turnovers and missed shots with traps when Harlan County got the ball inside. Hazard closed the first quarter with a 13-2 run, led by three baskets from senior center Spencer Brashear, to build an 18-8 lead.

"We started the game off like a deer in headlights," Jones said. "I don't understand that. We've played big games before. Our kids didn't come over here ready to play."

A 3-pointer by Hunter Hardy followed by a basket from Thompson gave the Bulldogs a 15-point lead late in the second quarter. Freshman forward Zach Caldwell's basket to close the half cut the deficit to 29-16 at halftime.

Harlan County switched to a man-to-man in the third quarter and added more pressure, forcing Hazard into eight turnovers in the period. Massingill and Tyler Miller had baskets to start a 19-2 run to end the quarter. Two straight 3-pointers by Sergent pulled the Bears even with 1:28 left. Putbacks by Miller and James Bond gave the Bears a 41-37 lead going into the fourth quarter.

"We finally decided we wanted to play and made a good run," Jones said.

"We got right back in the ballgame, and all we had to have was a stop or two.

We made some mental mistakes."

Harlan County was unable to build on its momentum in the fourth quarter as the Bulldogs recovered to build a five-point lead midway through the period. The Bears answered with an 8-0 run, capped by a steal and three-point play by Massingill. A three-point play by Hollan tied the game with two minutes left.

Caldwell and Tyler Triplett traded baskets before Harlan County tried to hold the ball for a final shot. Tyler Brewer lost the ball in the lane and Tyler Triplett beat the Bears down the court for a three-point play with 15 seconds left as a Harlan County defender was called for goal tending when he smacked the backboard.

Harlan County set up Alex Sergent for a 3-pointer that he nailed with three seconds left. Hazard called a timeout and set up Hollan for the game-winner. "We were trying to hold the ball and made two crucial mental mistakes, one on offense and one on defense when we smacked the board," Jones said. Hazard will take on Knott Central in the semifinals on Friday. Harlan County will meet Belfry on Thursday at 5 in the consolation bracket. Knott Central coasted past Belfry 71-54 in last night's second game.

HARLAN COUNTY (12-2)

Tyler Brewer 1-4 2-4 4, Alex Sergent 4-13 0-0 11, Chad Massingill 8-15 3-7 19, Aaron Caldwell 5-5 0-0 10, Chase Calton 0-2 0-0 0, James Bond 1-2 0-0 2, Tyler Miller 4-4 0-2 8, Zach Caldwell 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 24-46 5-13 56.

HAZARD (9-6)

Matt Thompson 6-9 0-1 13, Josh Hollan 7-11 1-5 16, Jarrod Combs 1-2 0-0 3, Evan Whitaker 2-5 4-4 8, Spencer Brashear 3-3 0-0 6, Mack Hall 1-1 0-0 2, Tyler Triplett 2-4 1-1 5, Collier Mobelini 1-2 0-0 3, Hunter Hardy 1-3 0-0 3, Trevor Kelly 0-0 0-0 0. Totals: 24-40 6-11 59.

Harlan County	8	8	25	15	—	56
Hazard	18	11	8	22	—	59

3-point goals: Harlan County 3-9 (Sergent 3-8, Brewer 0-1), Hazard 5-11 (Thompson 1-1, Combs 1-2, Mobelini 1-2, Hollan 1-3, Hardy 1-3). Rebounds: 24 (A. Caldwell 5, Brewer 5, Miller 4, Massingill 3, Sergent 2, Calton 2, Bond 2, Z. Caldwell 1), Hazard 18 (Brashear 4, Hall 4, Whitaker 3, Thompson 2, Combs 2, Triplett 2, Kelly 1). Turnovers: Harlan County 16, Hazard 16. Fouled out: Hazard (Whitaker).