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By JASON EPP

Leader & Times

FORGAN, Okla., — Forgan claimed another Regional title, but not without a fight from the Tyrone Bobcats. The Bulldogs jumped out early, and responded to each Bobcat rally, and put the game away late in the fourth quarter to win, 72-57.

“It’s always good to win,” Bulldogs coach Todd Kerr said. “I think we got their best shot tonight. They were ready to play and that happens to us most nights. But every time they made a run at us my kids responded and we finished the game the way you’re supposed to finish it.”

Forgan polished off the win by making 6 of 7 free throws in the final 2:26 to win by 15.

“It’s always good to be in pressure situations no matter what it is when you get in the playoffs and it’s good to see them respond,” Kerr said. “To make some plays down the stretch to get the

job done.”

The Bulldogs shell-shocked Tyrone with a 15-2 start that included threes by three different Bulldogs in the first three minutes.

“It was a big-time playoff environment,” Bobcats coach Clay Witt said. “It was loud and the crowd was rockin’ for Forgan, and I thought that and their team got us early. I was very proud of our guys, because they answered the bell. I said to them ‘are you going to get up of the canvas or are you just going to stay down.’ They got up, and it was a good ballgame the rest of the way.”

Tyrone finally made their first field goal of the game when Austin Olivas scored his first points with 1:25 left in the first quarter. With Forgan leading 24-8, Tyrone scored seven straight to cut the lead to nine (24-15) with 6:06 left in the half.

Tyrone was able to get to the charity stripe for 18 free throw attempts in the first half.

“Forgan is so tenacious on defense that we felt like we had to spread them out and get a little bit of one-on-one action, and it got them in some foul trouble,” Witt said. “We got to the free throw line, but we missed a ton of free throws early.”

With six minutes left until half, Forgan senior guard Jake Regier put on a show rarely seen in high school basketball. Already with 12 points to his name, Regier launched four straight 3-point bombs from 25 feet plus to put the Bulldogs back up by 17 (36-19) with 3:37 left until half.

“We had trouble all night guarding him (Regier),” Witt said. “I finally said if he even goes out to the bathroom, guard him in there.”

Regier finished the game with 30 points, including five shots from beyond the arc.

Tyrone recovered from Regier's bombing barrage, and finished out the half with a 9-1 run to cut the lead to single digits, 37-28.

The third quarter was a seesaw battle with neither team scoring consecutive baskets until Olivas sank two free throws to cut the Bulldogs lead to six with with 1:23 left.

Past Regier's 30 points, it was Chandler Bryer scoring 17 points (12 in the second half), including three 3-pointers and 4 of 4 free throw shooting. Jace Kerr scored 12 in his first start since returning from a broken thumb.

For the Bobcats Austin Olivas scored 24, including a pair of threes and 6 of 7 free throw shooting; Payson Slater added 22, and was 7 of 9 at the charity stripe.

Both team are still alive and will play in the Area Tournament.

Forgan (25-1) advances to the Area Championship, Friday at 8 p.m. at Woodward High School. The Bulldogs will face No.2 Arnett, the team they defeated in the state championship game last season. One win puts the Bulldogs back in the state tournament.

Tyrone (21-3) is not out of it either. The Bobcats will travel to Woodward to take on Leedey at 3 p.m. Thursday. Tyrone could earn a trip to the state tournament by winning three straight, including a Saturday matchup with the loser of the Forgan-Arnett game.

"Win or lose we knew we were going to Woodward," Witt said. "We still have the same goal in mind, getting to State. We just have to do it the back way now."

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