



JOSÉ LUIS VILLEGAS jvillegas@sacbee.com

The Christian Brothers Falcons' Stephan Hewitt (13) dribbles past the Woodcreek Timberwolves' Max VanLaningham (33) in the first half on Thursday at Christian Brothers.

Christian Brothers beats rival Jesuit in Holy Hoops

BY JOE DAVIDSON
jldavidson@sacbee.com

It's always a big deal when Christian Brothers plays Jesuit in the annual Holy Hoops basketball rumble.

It is an even bigger deal for the Falcons of Oak Park when they beat their fiercest high school sporting rival. That nearly happened a year ago when the teams played at Golden 1 Center, Jesuit taking home a 3-point victory, and the rematch was sweet for Christian Brothers on Saturday night.

In front of a packed house at Sacramento Bee-ranked No. 10

Jesuit, No. 9 Christian Brothers prevailed in the annual non-league showdown, 50-48, delighting the sea of Falcons fans and students decked in school-color blue. It was the program's first triumph of the Marauders in 10 years.

Returning Bee senior All-Metro guard/forward Stephan Hewitt had 19 points, and senior guard Daniel Powers provided 9 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists to push the Falcons to 14-4 on the season. Sophomore guard Andre Rabb-Patterson contributed 10 points, and the Falcons overcame cold free-throw and 3-point shooting to hold off Jesuit.

BIG ON BROWN

Christian Brothers coach Jermaine Brown can speak of big moments against Jesuit. He was a cool, left-handed, "baby-faced sophomore," as described by The Bee in 1999, when as a cool-headed guard, he helped lead his Burbank Titans past Jesuit that season. That helped vault the Titans to the section finals.

His latest triumph of Jesuit means even more for Brown because he is a coach, the lessons of effort and perseverance playing out.

"It feels really good," Brown said of the victory. "The guys were determined coming into

this game especially with how it ended last year: the questionable call with 0.4 seconds in regulation of a tie ball game. We knew defense would be key in this game as well as rebounding. We were able to hold them to six points in the fourth quarter, which ultimately allowed us to win the game."

Brown celebrated in his giddy postgame locker room. "It was electric," the coach said. "We've created our 'All-In' mantra, which has everyone buying in. Some guys have been with me for three years. This team has created a bond and brotherhood that is built to last."

A 2001 Burbank graduate, Brown attended TCU in Texas, played at Sacramento City College and spent time overseas as a civilian contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan to support American troops. In 2015,

SEE BASKETBALL, 4B

FROM PAGE 1B

BASKETBALL

Brown got into coaching at his alma mater, learning from his mentor, Lindsey Ferrell, a 500-game winning coach at Burbank and still a fixture on the Titans sideline.

Brown was hired as Christian Brothers coach during the 2021 spring COVID season. The Falcons went 6-21 in 2022, 15-15 in 2023 and 19-14 last season, grinding and clawing their way to a section final at Golden 1 Center. Christian Brothers started this season 8-0 before losses to out-of-area powerhouse programs Ventura Academy of Stockton (68-60) and Cathedral Prep of Pennsylvania (72-65).

Ranked ninth by The Bee, the Falcons suffered Capital Valley Conference losses of 77-65 to No. 3 Inderkum and 60-52 to No. 8 Woodcreek with a lot of season left to play.

The 6-foot-3 Hewitt leads the team in scoring at 16.8 points per game, and the team captain averages 7.4 rebounds. At 6-1, Powers leads CB in assists (5.1), steals (2.2) and is tied in rebounding with Hewitt. He is also a team captain along with Hewitt, senior guard Aaron Grijnsztein and senior center Cameron Nero.

A fast start, some speed bumps, a big rivalry win and a league championship chase has defined the season for a coach who lives for this.

"This is exactly why I coach!" Brown said. "For moments and games like this. The Jesuit game was back and forth, great atmosphere, possession by

possession. Adversity and challenges. I wouldn't have it any other way."

SHOWDOWN SATURDAY

Last Saturday, Bee No. 1 Monterey Trail lost to Modesto Bee top-ranked Modesto Christian, 83-71, to cap "The Battle at The Trail" event at Monterey Trail in a meeting of section Division I title contenders.

Modesto Christian is the three-time defending section champion and was led against Monterey Trail by Stanford-committed guard Myles Jones and Long Beach State-bound guard Gavin Sykes. Both have deep Sacramento-area roots. Monterey Trail has bolstered its schedule in an effort to reach a section final for the first time.

● **Storied Bishop O'Dowd** of Oakland defeated Bee No. 5 Destiny Christian Academy 60-47 in Sacramento in another whopper of a nonleague game. DCA is unbeaten in section competition with all nine of its losses coming to teams out of section or out of state, each of them competitive games.

● **Stockton Record** top-ranked Lincoln of Stockton beat Bee No. 6 Vanden 68-67 as part of the Monterey Trail event, as the Trojans showed they will be a factor in the Division I playoffs. Anthony Moore scored 25 points and Jagger Merolla 18. Christeanie Nealy led Vanden with 20. On Monday night, Modesto Christian beat Lincoln 76-72 in a Tri-City Athletic League



Christian Brothers head coach Jermaine Brown watches the Falcons defend against the Woodcreek Timberwolves on Thursday in Sacramento.

contest.

● **Bee No. 18 Natomas** topped No. 19 Grant in Del Paso Heights 63-53 in a nonleague game as Mano Jenkins scored 28 points with 11 rebounds and seven assists and Alfred Wilkins 16. Both programs have enjoyed memorable playoff seasons in recent years.

SATURDAY BLOCK PARTY AND MLK CLASSIC

On Saturday, Sheldon's Block Party Showcase will pit area programs against on out-of-area teams of note.

The games: St. Patrick/St. Vincent-Vallejo vs. Cosumnes Oaks at 9 a.m.; Woodcreek vs. Lincoln-Stockton at 10:30 a.m.; Edison-Stockton vs. Pleasant Valley-Chico at noon; Lodi vs. Rio Americano at 1:30 p.m.; Sacramento vs. Cornerstone Christian-Antioch at 3 p.m.; Liberty-Brentwood vs. Redwood-Larkspur at 4:30 p.m.; Franklin-Elk Grove vs. West-Tracy at 6 p.m.; Clayton Valley Charter-Concord vs. San Ramon Valley-Danville at 7:30 p.m.; and Sheldon vs.

Bishop O'Dowd-Oakland at 9 p.m.

● **Next Monday** at Inderkum, the Tigers host the Martin Luther King Jr. Dream Day Basketball Classic.

The games: Ventura Academy-Stockton vs. Fortune-Sacramento at 10 a.m.; Elk Grove vs. Ygnacio Valley-Concord at 11:30 a.m.; Natomas vs. Fremont-Oakland at 1 p.m.; Laguna Creek vs. Edison-Stockton at 2:30 p.m.; Sacramento High vs. Mountain House at 4 p.m.; Vanden vs. Christian Brothers at 5:30 p.m.; and Inderkum vs. Oakland Tech at 7 p.m.

SHOWDOWNS IN DELTA, SFL, CVC

● **No. 4 Franklin** at No. 7 Sheldon: Friday in the Delta League.

This league is a collection of Elk Grove Unified School District programs, and it is top heavy with top-ranked Monterey Trail, Franklin and Sheldon.

Sheldon (7-9) has had a hold on the Delta for a good part of the last two decades under coach Joey Rollings, but it's a wide-

as six setbacks were to out-of-section or state teams. The local losses were 58-55 to Vanden and, in a Delta opener, 65-62 to top-ranked Monterey Trail. Sheldon is led by seniors Chadwick Johnson, Sebastian James, Baron Sabir, Zion Johnson and Kingston Daniels.

● **No. 11 Rocklin** at No. 10 Jesuit: Wednesday in the Sierra Foothill League.

Isn't it odd to list Jesuit as a member of the SFL after more than 40 years in other leagues, mostly the Delta? The SFL will surely enjoy Jesuit's spectacular gymnasium and coach Tim Kelley's superbly coached club, but will Big Red be able to deal with the big guy in the middle for Rocklin?

That would be Sacramento State-bound Mark Lavrenov, a sturdy 6-7 senior who can bang inside, finish above the rim as a finisher and hit 3-pointers. He is averaging nearly 27 points and 13.8 rebounds. Jesuit (11-5) has just one in-section loss, to Christian Brothers, and opened SFL play with wins over Del Oro (64-55), Granite Bay (49-43) and Whitney (73-43). Among the Jesuit leaders is senior guard Asher Schroeder.

● **No. 15 Whitney** at No. 14 Oak Ridge: Wednesday in the SFL.

The league is topped by 3-0 teams in No. 2 Folsom and No. 10 Jesuit. Whitney's lone in-section loss amid a 13-4 start came last week to Jesuit, a 30-point blowout that Whitney coach Nick French expects to fire up his team. Short-handed Oak Ridge (11-4) is coming off SFL losses to Granite Bay (71-60) and to No. 11 Rocklin (68-43), and a loss to Whitney would drop the Trojans to 1-3 in the SFL.

● **No. 3 Inderkum** at

Brothers (77-65), maverick sophomore guard Sincere Hudson leads the Tigers in scoring (17.9 points), assists (5.6) and steals (2.7), and there will be matchups inside that can determine the winner.

Woodcreek (14-3) is led by 6-foot-9 junior forward Max VanLaningham, who has dunked and powered inside to the tune of averaging nearly 17 points and 10.4 rebounds. He also leads the team in assists with 2.5 and blocks at 4.3. Inderkum has some thunder dunkers and rim protectors in 6-10 Malachi Johnson and 6-8 Taylen Goodman.

THE BEE'S TOP 20

(Records entering Tuesday)

1. Monterey Trail (13-3)
 2. Folsom (14-2)
 3. Inderkum (12-1)
 4. Franklin (15-2)
 5. Destiny Christian (8-9)
 6. Vanden (11-6)
 7. Sheldon (7-9)
 8. Woodcreek (14-3)
 9. Christian Brothers (14-4)
 10. Jesuit (11-5)
 11. Rocklin (10-7)
 12. Placer (16-2)
 13. Sacramento (8-8)
 14. Oak Ridge (11-4)
 15. Whitney (13-4)
 16. Antelope (15-4)
 17. Rio Americano (13-5)
 18. Natomas (11-5)
 19. Grant (11-5)
 20. Fairfield (12-4)
- Bubble:** Burbank (9-5), Casa Roble (15-3), Colfax (12-5), Del Oro (8-9), Elk Grove (12-4), Kennedy (10-6), Lincoln (12-5), Marysville (12-5), McClatchy (10-5), Nevada Union (13-5), Rodriguez (13-3), Twelve Bridges (13-3), Vista del Lago (10-6).

Joe Davidson:
916-321-1280,
@SacBee_Joed