

Post-Tribune SPORTS

FOOTBALL

STEER CLEAR OF LB SPEARS

Young core spurs renaissance at Boone Grove

Brian Spears, a junior middle linebacker for Boone Grove, isn't afraid to say it out loud.

It feels good to be playing for a sectional title, given where the Wolves were once this season.

"A lot of people around here weren't very excited about what was going on after we lost the first two games," he said. "But now it's like, 'Look at what we did.'"

The season for the Wolves looked like it was on the road to nowhere, especially if Whiting beat them in Week 3. Losses to John Glenn and River Forest, teams with a combined record of 7-13, had Boone Grove at a pivotal moment.

The Wolves had to beat the Oilers on the road to get some confidence. Boone Grove had never defeated Whiting.



MIKE HUTTON

Boone Grove found something by changing the defensive scheme and welcoming back Zac Beatty, a linebacker/safety. Beatty was suspended for the first two games.

Before that game, Boone Grove switched from a three-player defensive front to a four-player front with four linebackers. The Wolves defeated the Oilers 19-6, scoring all their points in the second half after trailing 6-0 at halftime.

It was huge for Boone Grove (9-2) psychologically, and it set up the Wolves to win eight of their last nine games. That included a 47-20 victory over Roosevelt in the second round of the Class 2A sectionals.

Boone Grove coach Dan Kukulski said the team has even surprised him slightly. He thought they could be good, but perhaps not this good because

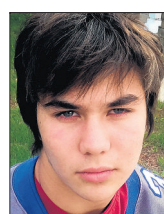


MICHAEL GARD/POST-TRIBUNE

Boone Grove's Dylan Paul, running into the Griffith defense in a September game, is part of a young core of players leading the Wolves.

they are so young.

Next year is also looking very good. Boone Grove will welcome returns by its starting quarterback in Dylan Paul, its leading rusher in Brae'ton Vann, its



Boone Grove middle linebacker Brian Spears leads the Wolves with 117 tackles and 23 for loss.

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BULLS

Early returns: Offense offensive

Save for Markkanen, Lopez, scoring for Bulls has been stagnant

BY K.C. JOHNSON
Chicago Tribune

ORLANDO, Fla. — In some ways, one could say the Bulls have been a rousing success thus far this young season.

Lauri Markkanen has shined brightly. Kris Dunn flashed athleticism throughout his first two games. Zach LaVine is close to getting cleared for contact.

And at 1-5, the pingpong balls are accumulating in the draft-lottery hopper.

But players are proud and competitive. And the strong ball movement that led to aesthetically pleasing offense, side-to-side reversal and plenty of open 3-point looks during the preseason has been less apparent once the bright lights came on. That's why the Bulls are a Friday loss to the Magic away from their first 1-6 start in 10 years.

The offensive numbers are downright scary.

After Wednesday's games, the Bulls rank last — by a wide margin — in scoring, field-goal percentage and offensive rating and are 28th in 3-point percentage and pace. Their 90 points per game are a full 3.1 points behind the 29th-place Kings, their .389 shooting percentage is .029 behind the 29th-place Mavericks and their meager 90.6 offensive rating — points scored per 100 possessions — is 4.3 points behind the 29th-place Kings.

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Cellar dwellers

Where the Bulls rank offensively in the NBA through Wednesday:

30th In scoring with 90 points per game. Golden State leads the league at 121.

30th In field goal percentage at .389. Golden State ranks No. 1 at .524.

28th In three-point field goal percentage at .311. Orlando has the highest at .442.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

VU looks 'ready' in warmup

Walker scores 16 points in exhibition victory over Robert Morris

BY MICHAEL OSIPOFF
Post-Tribune

Senior guard Tevonn Walker nailed a 3-pointer, a fitting start to Valparaiso's exhibition Thursday night against Robert Morris.

He finished with 16 points, seven rebounds and three assists in the Crusaders' 117-69 win against their overmatched NAIA Division II opponent at the Athletics-Recreation Center.

But Walker was far from the only player to contribute in a game that turned into an up-and-down dunkfest, highlighting the athleticism on Valparaiso's re-configured roster.

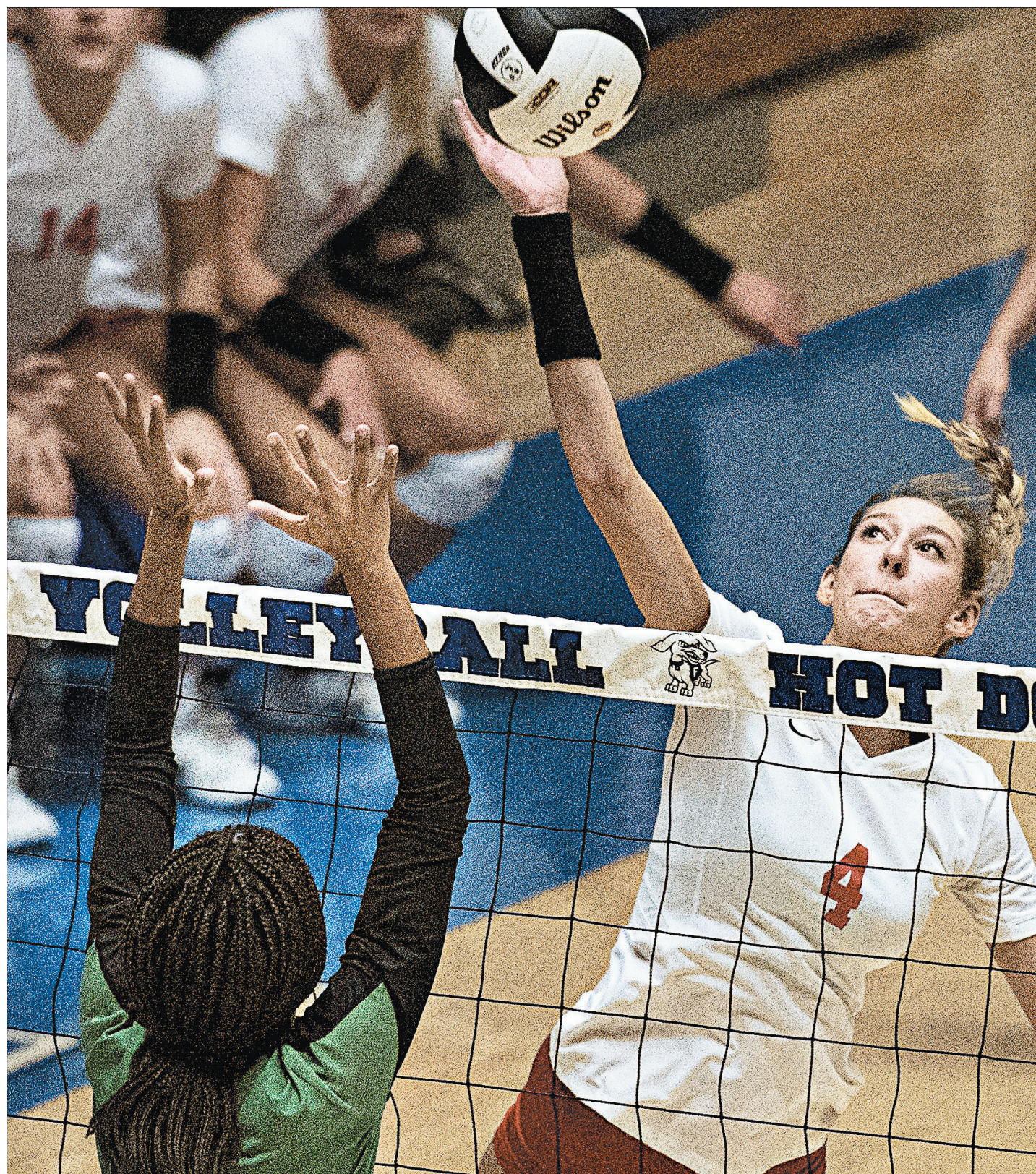
"I'm pretty pleased with the effort," Crusaders coach Matt Lottich said. "We looked like a team ready to play against someone else. It was fun to coach."

Valparaiso used all 11 available scholarship players by the 7:57 mark of the first half, and each played at least 10 minutes. Each scored at least three points, with

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GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Almighty Alexis



MICHAEL GARD/POST-TRIBUNE

Crown Point's Alexis Woodburn pounds the ball over the net during Saturday's Class 4A semistate match against Yorktown.

Woodburn heats up as a middle hitter for Crown Point

BY DAVE MELTON
Post-Tribune

It took some time for Crown Point senior Alexis Woodburn to find her spot.

The 6-foot-1 middle hitter didn't truly play the sport until the summer before eighth grade.

"We played it in gym class and I thought it was fun," she said. "By the time I got to high school, I was still pretty bad

because I'd only played for a year, but I made the JV team."

Four years later, Woodburn is a key cog for Crown Point, which will play in its second consecutive Class 4A state championship match at 4 p.m. Saturday at Ball State as the Bulldogs (35-3) take on Avon (36-3).

It was a steady progression for Woodburn, who said she had the benefit of being 6-1 by the end of her sophomore year.

"It took me a while," she said. "As I got to know the players and how they ran things, I got the hang of it pretty quickly."

But the biggest obstacle between Woodburn and consistent varsity time was patience because Crown Point had plenty of varsity-ready players at middle hitter when she arrived.

"Some of it was just the timing of when she came into the program," Crown Point

Next up

Class 4A state championship: Crown Point vs. Avon, 4 p.m. Saturday, Muncie

coach Alison Duncan said. "We've had a tremendous amount of talent on the varsity team in the last couple of years."

"Alexis probably could've been a starter at a different school much earlier."

While she waited for her

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