

By Pastor Vince Carrig

Sports Writer

Michael York sneaked behind Creek Valley dribbler Justin Huff, lanced the ball from his hand, and threw it down the court to preserve a 53-52 Plainsmen win over the Storm last Tuesday night (Feb. 8) in Grant.

Huff had the ball, 20 points already to his credit, and the opportunity to launch the winning shot when York bombed a pass to Alex Johnston, who wisely held the ball until the final seconds expired.

The teams deadlocked at 41-41 after the first three quarters, and just Perkins County forward Austin Gaston's free throw separated the teams as Creek Valley huddled on its sideline for the final 43 seconds.

Gaston had indeed taken a pass that Johnston bent around a defender and banged it off the backboard for a 50-47 Plainsmen lead with less than three minutes left.

But Huff's accomplice, guard Justin Behrends, dialed long-distance again to pull Creek Valley within one possession at 52-50.

Behrends hit five three pointers in 10 attempts on the evening.

Michael York, the Plainsmen's leading scorer with 15, hoped he had daggered Creek Valley's hopes with a flawless 12-foot jumper that put Perkins County ahead 52-47.

But Creek Valley gave every ounce of resistance it had, thinking it even had a road win on its fingertips.

Behrends' shooting and Huff's driving and popping erased a 36-25 advantage the Plainsmen had piled on with 6:25 left in the third quarter.

Jeremy Hagan scored eight first quarter points and the Plainsmen looked in control after a couple of swishes and fast breaks at 13-3 after the opening tip.

When Taylor Boldt caught a pass behind him and effortlessly switched hands in the lane to make it drop in the bucket, the Storm could have packed up their stuff.

York followed that highlight-reel shot with a "three," extending the Plainsmen lead to 26-14.

Not to remain outdone, Huff split two defenders, shot with his left hand from the right side of the basket, absorbed contact, and canned the "and one" bonus to cut the Plainsmen lead to five at 41-36.

Behrends came upon his better shooting percentage from behind the arc (50 percent) then from in front of it (30 percent and 8-for-20 overall) honestly, but had referees dazzled for two calls that cost Perkins County four points.

Behrends, intentionally or otherwise twice "sold" referees on the idea they should consider him jumping in the air, coming down and shooting as making a "jump step," instead of calling it the traveling violation that every other referee calls on that jump every time, every day ending in "y."

Creek Valley happened to slide the ball through the hoop after both of those travels, nicely adding four points that their side of the ledger never should have seen.

Plainsmen Head Coach Shawn Cole, visibly disturbed, voiced his displeasure to a referee during the next stoppage.

Behrends got whistled down for his third "jump step"—do not pass go, do not collect \$200, and

definitely no basket. He did not try that maneuver again.

Guard Quinton Hite hit a "three" in the fourth quarter and added another for 10 points; Gaston forced in two other field goals and finished with seven points for the game.

P.C. 53, Creek Valley 52

Creek Valley 12 11 18 11—52

Perkins Co. 19 11 11 12—53