

By Pastor Vince Carrig

Sports Writer

Perkins County's Quinton Hite sunk three "crunch time" free throws and Indians guard Ty Neill missed a three pointer from the left corner as the Plainsmen walked away with a 45-41 win over Ogallala last Thursday night (December 20) in Grant.

Still locked in a one-possession ball game in the final seconds, Ogallala dared Hite to end their hopes. His tally from the line with 16.2 seconds left booked the win for Perkins County.

"I knew I had to focus on those shots and put them in for my team," Hite said of the anxious moment that the crowd surrounded with deafening silence.



An 8-0, fourth quarter Plainsmen spree eclipsed a 34-30 Ogallala lead at the beginning of the fourth quarter. Hite highlighted that spurt with a steal from his own foul line and coast-to-coast run for points and a 38-34 Perkins County lead.

Hite led all scorers with 15 points. His driving scoop layup from mid-lane put Perkins County in the driver's seat (40-34) for the last half of the fourth quarter.

Blake Poppe (11 points) spun right and landed a baby hook from the left block for the Plainsmen, tying the game 34-34. The massive senior Poppe also asserted himself for an important fourth quarter putback.

Senior swing forward Jake Sexson feathered in two free throws with 1:07 left, keeping his Plainsmen on top 42-39. Perkins County needed his third quarter three pointer from the left corner to turn this close game into a win. Sexson did not miss any of the four free throw opportunities he received.

Ogallala's senior guard Neill hit two three pointers in the game, including one from just inside the parking lot to give the black-clad Indians a 33-28 lead with just over 9:00 left.

Ogallala started the fourth quarter by missing a layup and two free throws, opening the door for a Perkins County comeback.

Neill's free throw granted Ogallala a nine-point, 22-13 advantage back in the second quarter.

One of two three-pointers from Hite helped Perkins County chop through that lead, though, pulling the home team to within one (22-21) at halftime.

Sensational shifty freshman Jordan Cogdill bid to take over the game early, with three slashing layups and six early points for Ogallala.

The Plainsmen defense fenced the lane and calmed Cogdill (12 points) down to half-speed. Cogdill did redirect a stray rebound to cut Ogallala's deficit to 42-41 with 47 seconds left.

Senior forward Colton White's four quick points kept Perkins County competitive late in the third quarter. Two jumpers from beyond 10 feet offset a Neill three pointer and helped the reserve player to six points.

Reserve center Alex Ewert threatened the Plainsmen with a three-point play in the third quarter and some second-chance points in the fourth quarter. Plainsmen guard Elliot Carlson snuffed Ogallala's 6-foot-4 Ewert from behind late in the game to limit the tall junior to seven points.

"Our defense in the fourth quarter was definitely the key to the win tonight, just the difference in the level [at which] they played from the first three [quarters] to the fourth," Plainsmen Head Coach Shawn Cole said after the game.

Perkins County limited its turnovers to seven against Ogallala, far fewer than the 30+ they committed in a heartbreaking home loss to Dundy County-Stratton just a week earlier.

Next Action

The 2-5 Perkins County boys host 4-1 Wallace at 5:30 on Friday in their own invitational tournament. The Wildcats have whipped three Class D teams sporting a combined record of 1-21, and have played no Class C teams. The winner plays either 4-4 Cambridge or 5-3 Sandhills-Thedford at 7:15 on Saturday.

PC 45, Ogallala 41

	1	2	3	4	
Ogallala	15	7	12	7	—41
Perkins Co.	11	10	9	15	—45

Scoring leaders—Perkins County: Hite 3FG (2[x3]) 3/4FT—15; Poppe 3 1/3—7; Sexson (1) 4/4—7; White, Colton 3—6; Ogallala: Cogdill 4 2/5—12; Neill 1 (2) 2/4—10; Thorson 3 2/3—8; Ewert, Alex 3 1/1—7.