

SPORTS

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DAILY LOCAL NEWS

Malvern captures Inter-Ac title

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MALVERN—It was the equivalent of a boxing match.

Malvern Prep scored. Then Germantown Academy would do the same. When the dust settled, someone would prevail.

Malvern Prep did just that en route to winning the Inter-Ac League boys basketball championship for the second consecutive season by defeating visiting Germantown Academy, 55-52, on Saturday.

"They make shots and we had to continue to get better and challenge them," said Malvern Prep head coach Jim Rullo. "That is not an easy thing to do. I think we are a resilient group. When you look at our wins this year it is not because we are the most talented group. Our team has bought into doing what is necessary for the team to win."

It may not have looked pretty late in the fourth, but the Friars did just that.

Find a way to win.

After Germantown came roaring back with just two minutes left to cut the lead to 51-43, senior forward Brendan Kilpatrick stole the ball and headed down the court to convert a layup. It was the fifth consecutive point that Kilpatrick scored for Malvern in a two-minute span.

"I kind of wanted to finish the season the right way," said Kilpatrick. "The steal was big, but they

came back down hit shots after. We try to outfight teams, and I think tonight we did that."

Germantown continued the battle. Junior Julian Moore converted two free throws, then a Greg Dotson jumper with 11 seconds remaining.

Malvern's backs were against the wall.

"What has helped is that we have played in atmosphere like that before," said Rullo. "You can't simulate that at practice."

The Friars kept their cool, as when the final buzzer blew they celebrated another Inter-Ac championship.

"Give them credit," said senior point guard Steve Perpiglia. "They have talented players and they proved they can make shots in pressure situations. We would get a bucket and they came back and did the same thing. I think we grinded it out and made our free throws in the end."

It sure was a grind for Malvern, who at one point led by 10 points early in the fourth quarter.

"We weren't comfortable," said Kilpatrick. "We knew they weren't going to settle and relax. I think we learned a little bit you can't let up and you have to play full force."

Looking to cut into Malvern's lead, Germantown started to warm up from the outside to start the third quarter. Dotson converted a jumper to start the quarter, then a three-pointer on Germantown's next possession to cut the score to 33-25.

"If they make a shot, it is just even that more important to come down on offense and handle the pressure rather than stay back on our heels," said Kilpatrick. "I think Stevie and the other guys did a great job to run the offense."

James Drury couldn't be stopped from the outside at times as he hit a three the next possession. The third quarter ended with Malvern securing an 11-point lead.

"When we played them last time we only beat them by one," said Perpiglia. "We were up kind of the whole time, but there was no doubt there were going to bring themselves back and they did. We were up this time and they did the same thing. We toughed it out."

Kilpatrick demonstrated his passing talents as he found senior Dennis Gabert with a nifty pass. Gabert was fouled on the play as he converted his free throw to give the Friars a 27-16 lead with 1:56 left.

The road isn't over yet for Malvern. They will play in the Independent Schools state tournament set to tip off Tuesday on its home court.

"We still have a couple games left in the state tournament," said Rullo. "Hopefully we can respond and keep the season going."

As for the players and staff of Malvern Prep, they can celebrate until Tuesday. Come tip off, Kilpatrick notes that they will be ready.

"It will be all business on Tuesday baby," said Kilpatrick. "We'll be ready."