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Fancy Seeing You Here: TSA, Woodsville Boys in Rare Hoop Encounter

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Woodsville — Monday night marked the first — and most likely the last — meeting between the Woodsville High School and Sharon Academy boys basketball teams. The Engineers made the most of the rare matchup by defeating the visiting Phoenix, 55-43.

With the Central Vermont League in its last season following the loss of several members including Chelsea, Whitchester and Cabot, TSA is waiting to join the Marble Valley League next year. The Phoenix (2-2) is consequently playing an interim schedule pieced together by coach and athletic director Blake Fabrikant that features the likes of Woodsville, Christ Covenant, Lake Champlain Waldorf and Northfield.

Woodsville (2-1), which will play Vermont teams Rivendell and Blue Mountain twice each later in the season, was led on Monday by freshman Elijah Flocke, who came off the bench to score 18 points.

The young guard, who showed a soft touch in and around the paint, claims to have limited shooting range.

"I just drive and try to finish," Flocke said. "I don't really shoot well from the perimeter, so I just like driving. I try to stay quick on my feet so I can get around big guys."

Flocke and his mates employed overall quickness and defensive intensity, jumping out to a 19-12 at the end of the first quarter. Sharon responded by outscoring Woodsville, 8-6, in the second quarter, thanks to the strong inside play of Fisher Kelley (20 points) and Olly Skeet-Browning (10 points).

"I think we had a huge advantage inside and didn't exploit it enough," Fabrikant said of his frontcourt, which also got six points underneath from Ronald Johnson.

The hosts regrouped after intermission, building a 14-point lead early in the fourth quarter before the Phoenix launched a comeback bid, which included nine points by Kelley. The senior hit from 3-point land to bring his team within seven, at 50-43, with 1:01 remaining, but the Engineers closed out the scoring with two free throws each by Patrick Reardon-Estes and Billy Green and another by Connor Maccini. Green and Maccini each finished with 11 points for Woodsville, and both hit a pair of 3-pointers.



Woodsville coach Jamie Walker expressed a measure of concern over his team's late-game heroics in its third home game of the season.

"We need to start playing better," Walker said. "If they want to play up-tempo, we need to start protecting the basketball. Our decision-making isn't where it should be. We talked about being up 12 or 14 with 3 minutes to go. Why are we sprinting up the floor to try to make baskets? We're not the ones who have to score.

"We want to run, but if it's not there, don't do it. There are times to run and times not to."

Woodsville's offense may have been rushed at times, but the Engineers' trapping defensive effort was on point, and Sharon's relatively inexperienced backcourt was susceptible to the pressure.

The Phoenix never quit, however, ensuring that Monday's contest was entertaining until the end.

"Yeah, we showed a fighting spirit," Fabrikant said. "We've got a long, long way to go. The older I get as a coach the grumpier I get, so it's had to connect the obvious pieces for these guys. But I think we have a ton of potential, and I'm just proud of their effort at the end. At least we fought and it was dignified; it just comes down to decision-making."

Notes: Woodsville went 12-for-18 from the free-throw line and hit seven 3-pointers. Sharon was 1-for-4 from the line with two 3s. ... The Engineers return to action Wednesday at Groveton, and TSA travels to Websterville Baptist on Saturday. ... Monday's game featured two veteran coaches, with Walker in his 19th season and Fabrikant in his 10th.