



Racers beat Lakers, again

By **Tim Masmar**
STAFF WRITER

ELGIN — Sherick Simpson did his regular thing for the Elgin Racers Friday, scoring 21 points, grabbing nine rebounds, handing out six assists, and collecting four steals.

However, it was the unselfish hustle of Rodney Rollins, the offensive aggressiveness displayed by Corey Brown and a second-half boost supplied by Nick Zachary that allowed the Racers to beat familiar foe Lake County 137-121 at Judson College. It was the seventh straight victory for the Racers (12-3) and third win in four tries this season against the Lakers.

Rollins, the team's do-it-all small forward, tallied 14 points, 11 rebounds and had three assists and three steals, while Brown tied Zachary and Rollins for team-high scoring honors (22 points) and rebounds (11). Zachary, on the bench the entire first half, scored all 22 of his points in the second half on 10-of-13 shooting from the floor.

"Every one of those guys on our bench are pros. Sometimes it's hard to balance playing time," Racers coach Jim Condill said. "We found some combinations tonight that worked well and we didn't want to mess with it. We got a spark from a few different players."

The Racers dominated play for most of the evening, but had trouble putting away the Lakers until the final quarter. After falling behind 6-0 to start the game, the Racers scored 13 unanswered points to jump ahead 13-6 with 7:44 remaining in the first quarter. Brandon Moore (10 points) had seven points during the run, capping the scoring with a 3-pointer following a pair of one-touch passes from Luke Condill (6 points, 4 assists) and Simpson.

The Lakers surged ahead by as much as 21-17 on a pull-up jumper by Todd Peterson, but the lead would quickly evaporate — for good. The Racers immediately went on a 13-4 run to ease ahead 30-25 by the end of the first quarter. By the time the Racers' Frank Richards (18 points) buried 3-pointers on back-to-back possessions, the Racers enjoyed a 48-40 advantage with 5:04 remaining in the first half. They went to halftime with a 59-49 lead after a steal and layup by Rollins.

"My role is just to do it all. I do the dirty things," said Rollins, who had eight points and eight rebounds in the first half. "I've played all roles my whole career. As long as we win, that's all I need. That's everything to me."

Behind sizzling shooting from Tony Murdock (game-high 27 points) and Ryan Edwards (26 points), the Lakers put a scare into the Racers at the end of the third quarter, pulling within 96-89 on a 3-pointer by Edwards. However, Richards answered with a 3-pointer and Zachary scored four straight points to push the margin back up to 103-91 with 9:05 left in the game. The Lakers never got closer than nine points the rest of the way.

"When we get up on a team like that we have to finish them. We can't just play around," Brown said. "In the second half we came together and finally got it done."

Notes: Elgin native Marcus Smallwood is no longer with the team. ... Point guard Brandon Watkins made his first appearance for the Racers after returning from playing overseas in Turkey. He was impressive in his debut, scoring 14 points and dishing out a game-high eight assists. ... The only two dunks in the game came in the final 30 seconds — both by the Lakers. ... Both teams scored 37 points in the third quarter. ... For the game, the Racers shot 53 of 103 (51.5 percent) from the floor. ... The Racers have two home games remaining at Judson — June 15 vs. Colorado and June 23 vs. Grand Rapids.