



Racers rally for another late win

By **Tim Masmar**
STAFF WRITER

ELGIN — It's almost like the Elgin Racers purposely spot their opponents a big lead in the first half, just so they can come back and make the final two quarters that much more entertaining for the fans.

Friday night against Grand Rapids, the Racers rallied back from a 13-point, third-quarter deficit to post a 114-109 win in front of a near sellout crowd in the team's final home game of the season at Judson College.

"Coach (Jim Condill) kept telling us to stay together and the shots would start falling," said Racers guard Nick Zachary, who finished with 21 points and seven assists, including a crowd-pleasing alley-oop slam dunk pass to Sherick Simpson in the final seconds. "We knew if we picked up the defense they would get a little out of control. When we made them speed it up, that's when we started to comeback."

The Racers (15-5) faced their biggest deficit, 85-72, with twenty-two seconds left in the third quarter following a 3-pointer by the Flight's David Williams.

However, the potential back-breaking, long-distance shot only seemed to light a fire under the Racers, who immediately responded with a 10-2 run carrying over into the fourth quarter.

New addition Brandon Weiss gave the Racers some key minutes during that stretch, contributing a free throw and putback off a free-throw miss to pull the Racers within 87-82 with 9:26 remaining in the game. A few minutes later Weiss (8 points, 4 rebounds) buried a 3-pointer from the top of the key to slice the deficit to 94-93 with 6:30 showing on the clock.

The Racers eventually pulled even at 98 on a 3-pointer by Zachary and took their first lead, 100-98, on a pair of Zachary free throws. On the next trip down the court, new addition Ayinde Avery (6-9) ignited another fast break with a block on the defensive end. Elgin's Frank Richards then saved Avery's block from going out of bounds and was able to locate a streaking Zachary at the other end of the court for an easy deuce.

A minute later, Richards (11 points) stroked a 3-pointer to give the Racers a comfortable 105-99 lead with less than two minutes to play.

"I was caught off guard by how fast everyone was at first," said Avery, who was plagued by foul trouble early, but finished with six points, eight rebounds and three blocks. "I'm just here to give a presence down low and grab all the rebounds I can. I can score if they need me to, but we got a lot of scorers on this team and that's fine with me."

After a lengthy wait for Grand Rapids (10-8) to arrive at Judson for the game, the Racers started out fast, jumping out to a 10-1 lead on a layup by Simpson and a pair of free throws by Marcus Jackson (10 points). The lead then grew to 20-8 on a long 3-pointer by Luke Condill (11 points, 5 assists), before the Flight settled in.

Grand Rapids took its first lead of the game, 25-24, in the opening minutes of the second quarter following five consecutive points by Milo Stovall (team-high 25 points). The lead changed hands several times the remainder of the first half, before the Racers strolled to halftime with a 53-50 lead on a layup by Jackson at the buzzer.

The Racers have one final game remaining next Friday at Lake County before the International Basketball League playoffs begin on July 13 in Elkhart, Ind.

Racers guard Brandon Watkins is no longer with the team after getting asked to tryout for the Los Angeles Clippers.

Racers 114, Grand Rapids 108