

Catoosa closes out 2024 season with emotional loss. Three key figures in the emotional loss



By: Charles Thomas, Feb. 29, 2024

Stroud, Okla. — The Catoosa Indians closed out their 2024 season with a 79-62 loss to the Ft. Gibson Tigers in the OOSAA playoffs on Thursday night at Stroud High School.

The Indians ended their season with a clean playoff run, winning three of four games to get to the OSSAA Area semifinals. While Catoosa didn't end the season with a win, it has positives to look for.

The game featured multiple Catoosa seniors ending their careers, while some players will continue their basketball journey. Catoosa coach Evan Drake and seniors, Titus Miller and Kanen Bristol, all played different roles in Thursday's playoff game but combined to make the season finale bittersweet.

Coach Evan Drake

Drake has been in the coaching business for eight years and didn't let his team give up, even after going down 19 at the half. He called on past performances to try and make a game out of it and Catoosa ended up winning the second half of the game, 45-43.

Drake has coached the Indians for the past two seasons and let his emotions show as the game closed out (see top picture). He reflected on his seniors and why he got so emotional.

“They mean everything to me,” Drake said. “Titus Miller, been with him for three years and he’s like a son to me. The senior class means the world to me; 6 a.m. workouts, picking kids up in the middle of the night on the side of the road, I mean these kids mean everything to me.”

Senior Titus Miller

Miller is the sort of player you don’t see very often. He won back-to-back Verdigris Valley Conference Player of the Year, is a McDonald’s All-American nominee and is going to Division II Truman State in Missouri. The accomplishments are all important, but Miller is truly grateful for his team and the moments that bond them together, even in a loss like this.

“Even though we came up short, I’m just proud of my guys,” Miller said. “The bond we created with each other just means a lot to us.”

Drake doesn’t undervalue his star pupil and has seen him grow from a young kid to a leader of men.

“Titus is the glue and he’s our best player,” Drake said. “Last year he was our best player, but he wasn’t the leader, and, this year, to see him take that leadership role was just a huge and awesome thing to see.”

Senior Kanen Bristol

Bristol was you’re classic off the bench guy, but he never let that get to him. With the game settled, Bristol came in and hit two three pointers to inspire the Catoosa bench and fans.

Miller was as excited as anyone in the arena to see Bristol hit those threes. The two have become good teammates but even better friends throughout their years playing Catoosa basketball.

“I showed up to Catoosa and I saw this random fat kid and I thought he was hilarious,” Miller said. “And that bond has been there ever since.”