

East proves it's No. 1 by routing Highland

By Mike Sorensen

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It was the same day that East had just supplanted Highland as the No. 1 4A team in the Deseret News prep poll. So the Leopards had something to prove. And they showed their worthiness in convincing fashion by toppling the Rams 96-81 before a packed house at East Tuesday afternoon.

The win left East all alone at the top of Region Three with a perfect 6-0 record and with a strong claim as the state's best prep team for the time being.

Back in mid-December, the two teams had met in the finals of the S. L. Valley Holiday Classic with Highland coming from behind to win 75-66. But the Leopards were without the services of 6-foot-6 ace Greg Grant who was nursing a broken wrist.

Tuesday, Grant was there with play that East coach Dick Milne described as "sensational throughout the whole game." Grant led all scorers with 26 points, even though sitting out more than a quarter with foul trouble, and was the dominant force on the boards all day. He definitely made a difference.

Highland came out burning and looked like it

would blow East right off the court. Layups by John Baucom and Gordon Kener and a three-point play by Mike Maxwell gave the Rams a 7-0 lead before East realized the game had started.

But the Leopards slowly cut away at the Ram lead and scored eight straight points in the final two minutes of the quarter on two drives each by Grant and Paul Schmutz to lead 21-16.

After Baucom hit a short one to start the second quarter, Schmutz hit two more baskets and from there Highland was never closer than four.

Schmutz, by far the smallest Leopard at 6-foot, led the East surge in the first half, scoring 17 points, mostly on drives up the middle. Not bad for a guy who's only started a couple of games this season. He is starting now that Rich Gremillion is sidelined with a broken finger.

"We won today because we had seven men who played well," said Milne. "Every single man went out and did his job." Milne was happy with every player, but had special praise for Schmutz, and substitutes Nalin Maxfield and Mike Matheson, three guys who are sometimes overshadowed by the likes of Brad Boyle, David Johnson, George Furgis, and Grant.

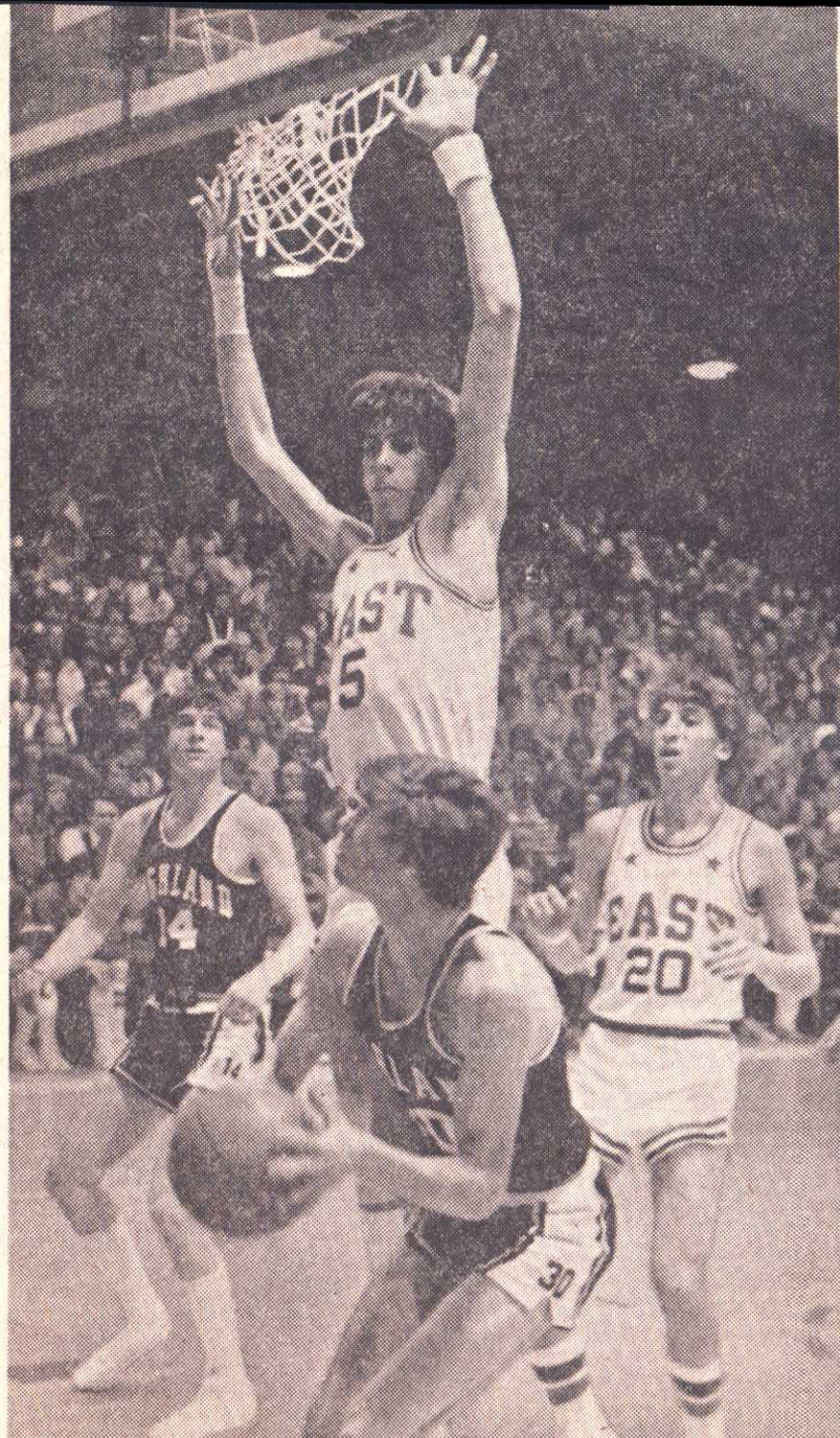
Highland didn't play poorly in the loss. The Rams just had a hard time keeping up with the taller Leopards. Highland shot well from the field, but was hurt by an inability to get more than one shot off each time down the floor. When the Leopards missed, they had someone there to put the ball back in.

The Rams had good performances from Baucom, Maxwell and Kener, who finished with 25, 24, and 22, respectively. That accounted for 71 of the team's 81 points. But Highland is finding out as the season goes on that it takes more than two or three ball players to win ball games.

Elsewhere in the region Cottonwood pulled an upset beating West 73-56, and Skyline had an easy time with Granite 80-58.

The Colts won their second league contest behind the 25-point scoring of Jim Brown. West, which stands at 2-4, the same as Cottonwood, counted on 20 points from Carey Lloyd.

Granite suffered its fourth straight defeat, as Skyline's inside game was just too much for the smaller Farmers. Brent Layton led the way for the Eagles with 23 points, while Brandon Bennett added 15. Brad Abel led the Farmers, putting in 19 points, while leading scorer Kevin Kuhn was limited to only 11.



Deseret News photos by Howard C. Moore

East's Greg Grant goes high as Highland's Bill Moon waits to shoot during East's 96-81 victory Tuesday.