

East Trips Skyline, Solidifies Region Lead

By Roger Graves
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It wasn't supposed to happen in a league which long ago made balance its by-word. But it has. Three distinct divisions now exist in Region Three—the upper division (reserved for frontrunners), the lower division (for cellar dwellers) and the ever growing division between East High and the rest of the region.

East, no longer a surprise to anyone who follows prep basketball in Salt Lake, reaffirmed its No. 1 Class 4-A ranking, maintained its regular season unbeaten streak, and virtually signed, sealed and delivered the 1979 Region Three championship to its own doorstep Tuesday evening.

All of these accomplishments were made possible by a single victory, a come-from-behind 71-64 triumph at Skyline which left the Leopards two games in front of the region pack with only three to play (including two at home).

"I must admit," said East Coach Dick Milne before the Skyline challenge Tuesday, "that a win would put us in a nice position. A very nice position."

That it did. But not before the Leopards (now 9-0) were given a solid scare by Skyline.

Salt Lake Tribune Sports

Wednesday Morning, February 14, 1979

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In a game which featured nine ties, 11 lead changes and enough drama to please even the most avid followers, Skyline was second best by merely a missed free throw or three. After East sprinted to a 20-15 first quarter edge, Skyline reeled off eight unanswered points to begin the second period and assumed a 23-20 advantage. It was cat and mouse during the remainder of the first half, with Brandon Bennett's fiery shooting finally supplying the Eagles with a 36-32 intermission lead.

Skyline enjoyed its largest lead of the game at 41-36 early in the third period. But

then the Leopards reached back and found the spirited offense which had seemingly deserted them in the second half. With Greg Grant treating a near-capacity crowd to a dazzling display of spinning drives and silky jump shots, East erupted for 10 straight points and was ahead, 46-43. And ahead to stay.

In all, East outshoot Skyline 21-12 in the third period. But the Eagles, with Scott Spurrier now the man of the hour, forced a deadlock at 56 with 6:14 to play. But again, the Leopards turned on the afterburners,

outscored the Eagles 10-2 during a two minute stretch for a 66-58 advantage, and kept their poise to secure the seven-point decision.

Grant enjoyed a marvelous evening while popping in 33 points to lead all marksmen. But George Furgis (10 points) and Rich Gremillion, making his comeback after suffering a broken finger on his shooting hand and scoring 10 points, provided plenty of support. Paul Schmutz, who again came off the bench to play splendidly, and Brad Boyle were also important characters in the East triumph. Bennett paced Skyline (7-2) with 21 points, while Spuurier swished 18.

A stunning upset and a near upset spiced the remainder of Class 4-A action Tuesday night. Just when it appeared winless Olympus would taste triumph, Jim Brown popped in a 25-footer at the buzzer to collect 30 points and spark Cottonwood to an 85-84 victory over the Titans. Meanwhile, West climbed to 3-7 and kept its tournament hopes alive by turning back Granite, 75-59, in Region Three.

The actual upset took place in Region Two, as Kearns shocked Brighton for the second time this season, 63-58 behind Todd Clark's 17 points. Orem, a 64-58 victor over Granger, took advantage of the Bengal loss to move into first place with a 7-3 mark.



—Tribune Staff Photo by Tim Kelly

"Where'd it go?" East's Rich Gremillion, left, and Skyline's Brandon Bennett search the skies for a basketball Tuesday during a Region Three contest. East won the game, 71-64, and remained unbeaten in league play at 9-0. Gremillion is just returning to action after suffering broken hand.