

## JAYS GROUNDED

Jerry Keuhn  
Reporter

The West Platte boys basketball team had a great regular season and followed it up with an exciting postseason run. But as the old saying goes — all good things must come to an end, and so they did Saturday for the Bluejays.

West Platte finished with an overall record of 22-7 after losing 69-56 to Osceola, 28-1, in the Class 2 quarterfinal played at Raymore-Peculiar High School in Peculiar March 10. Along the way, they placed second in the KCI Conference to Mid-Buchanan, then beat the Dragons for the District 15 championship and Putnam County in the sectional game in St. Joseph.

“We had a tough path to get here and we knew we were in position to be a Cinderella-type team,” West Platte coach Zane Tanner said. “We didn’t back down and it was good to see the guys keep battling until the very end. We never want to lose and still would have liked to have gone further and done more, but we are so proud of how the guys handled themselves throughout the season and what they did accomplish.” Playing in front of a packed gym with several spectators unable to fit in the gymnasium, West Platte faced full-court pressure from Osceola. The Indians forced several early Bluejays turnovers — eight in the first quarter and 18 in the game — while knocking down a handful of three-pointers in the first half, and led 37-26 at halftime.

West Platte would not roll over, however, and slowly fought its way back in the second half, eventually pulling to within one point with about five minutes remaining in the game. Erick Roe, who had a career-high 45 points against Putnam County in the sectional game, made a critical three-pointer late and Matt Parker made two free throws as the Jays cut the deficit to 53-52, but the Indians then went on an 11-0 run to post a 12-point lead with a minute left. Roe was limited to 16 points in the game, while Kyle Elder led West Platte with 19 points and 12 rebounds. Parker also finished in double digits with 11 points scored.

“We had an unbelievable comeback to get within one point, but once we pulled within one point we didn’t score on any of our next six possessions,” Tanner said. “We were hurting them in the paint and kept trying to attack, but we didn’t execute when we needed to.”

The difference in the rematch from last year’s quarterfinal, which West Platte won, could partially be attributed to Osceola’s hot shooting hand, as the Indians made 11-of-23 three-pointers. Billy Wood led Osceola with 25 points, including five three-pointers, while Stefan Garrison had 20 and Jann Catt, 12. Each time the Jays were in position to challenge for the lead, Osceola answered with another big basket.

“Another difference in the game was on inbound plays where we fell asleep and didn’t guard Billy Wood,” Tanner said. “You have to give them credit, I’m sure there was a bit of a revenge factor and they played poised. We didn’t make them uncomfortable in the way they scored, while they guarded Erick pretty tight and he wasn’t able to get as many open looks as he did in the sectional game. He can’t score 45 points every time and I thought he still did everything we asked him to and had a great season.”

Roe now has 1,609 points in his career and has moved past Brian Barmann (1,607 points) and Adam Barmann (1,476) in the past month and is now behind only Paul Miller (1,976 career points) in the West Platte record book. Next year, in Roe’s senior season, he will lead a team that will need to replace three instrumental seniors who will graduate and were part of the second group of seniors to graduate with four district titles — Ben VanAmburg, Matt Parker and Austin Lintner. The three combined to score 954 points in 228 games for West Platte and VanAmburg was a three-year starter.

“These were three guys that you hope the underclassmen will emulate both on and off the field and they really represent what West Platte basketball is all about,” Tanner said. “They all had a great career and we’ll miss them.”

Roe leads Jays to  
sectional victory

Just call it the “Erick Roe Show.”

The West Platte junior starred in his own highlight reel in the Class 2 sectional game played March 7 at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, scoring 45 points and leading the Bluejays to a 64-61 victory over Putnam County (20-8). Roe’s effort bested his previous career high of 38 points in 2006; his 2007 season-high coming in to the game was 36.

The Jays led most of the way by riding on Roe's back as he scored 23 of his 45 points in the first half. He made eight three-pointers in the game, including a critical one towards the end of the fourth quarter on which he was fouled and then made the free throw for a four-point play and a three-point lead. Roe was also 7-of-7 from the free throw line, but his teammates allowed the Midgets to stay in the game by making only 1-of-11 free throws.

"Like any great shooter, when he's hot, you want the ball in his hands," Tanner said about Roe after the game. "It wasn't our plan to go to him so much, but it was working so we went with it."

Elder was West Platte's second leading scorer with eight points, while four other Jays combined for 11 points.