

Hillgrove 66, Harrison 47 – PERFECT 10

Hawks' spotless start reaches double digits against Hoyas

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MARIETTA - Hillgrove maintained its undefeated status Saturday, beating Harrison, 66-47, in the Southeast Basketball Academy's Atlanta High School Hoop Festival at the Cobb County Civic Center.

After a sluggish start, the Class AAAA No. 3 Hawks (10-0) turned up the defensive pressure in the second quarter and took advantage of several Harrison turnovers to pull away. "This was exam week, and we had two days off from practice, so I didn't know if we would be ready," Hillgrove coach Edward Morris said. "We started slowly, but we started playing much better defensively in the second quarter, and that created some opportunities for us."

Darius Baugh scored 18 points, while Mike Lawrence added 16 points and Millan Rodrigo had 13 to lead Hillgrove. For Harrison (4-5), it was the fourth loss in five games after the Hoyas opened the season with three wins in their first four contests. "We didn't play very well," Harrison coach Robert Churchwell said. "Hillgrove is a good team that played well." Casey Belli scored 17 points to lead Harrison.

The first quarter was a nip-and-tuck battle, with the teams trading several leads before Hillgrove ended the quarter with a slight, 14-13 advantage. With Hillgrove leading, 22-19, Lawrence scored on a layup with 3:07 remaining in the first half. After Harrison turned the ball over on an offensive foul by Jamal Watson, Rodrigo made a layup to increase the Hawks' lead to 26-19 with 2:51 left. Another Harrison turnover led to another Hillgrove basket as Baugh scored on a layup with 2:41 left. The Hoyas then turned the ball over on a traveling call and Baugh drove in for a layup to increase the Hawks' lead to 30-19 with 2:03 left. Belli nailed a 3-pointer for Harrison with 1:35 left and Hillgrove went into the locker room at halftime with a 30-22 advantage.

Hillgrove took a 32-22 lead at the beginning of the third quarter, but Belli responded with another 3-pointer to cut the Hawks' advantage to 32-25 with 6:14 remaining in the quarter. However, a 3-pointer by Rodrigo was followed by a Harrison turnover, which in turn was followed by a Rodrigo layup that gave Hillgrove a 37-25 lead with 5:45 left in the third quarter. After Harrison turned the ball over again, Heath Houston scored on a putback of his own shot and Lawrence hit a 3-pointer to further boost Hillgrove's lead to 42-25 with 4:24 left and complete what turned out to be a 10-0 run. While Harrison narrowed the margin slightly on a few occasions, Hillgrove stayed in control the rest of the game.

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