

## Osborne wins romp over Morgan County

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Published: December 23, 2007

MARIETTA -- Osborne needed this one. Five straight losses were more than enough. The Cardinals played a dominant second quarter where they outscored Morgan County by 14 points to set the stage for a 67-47 victory over the Bulldogs on Saturday afternoon in the first game of the SEBA Atlanta High School Hoop Festival at the Cobb County Civic Center. Morgan County battled back in the third before Osborne pulled away again in the final quarter.

"We needed to get the monkey off our back," Osborne coach John Jenkins said. "It was huge to come out, play well and get a win convincingly so we can get back on the right track." Osborne is playing a Christmas Tournament in Bluffton, S.C., next week before beginning 2008 with a non-region game at Sprayberry. The Cardinals are hosting Cherokee on Jan. 8 to resume Region 5AAAA play.

Rico Spear was named Osborne's player of the game after finishing with 25 points to lead the Cardinals (4-5). Kire Jackson added 12 points and Randy Phillips finished with 11. Morgan County's D.J. Calhoun had a double-double with 11 points and 12 rebounds.

The Cardinals took control of the game in the second quarter when they applied pressure on both Morgan County's guards and Calhoun, who controlled the paint. Their defensive strategy, combined with an up-tempo offense, helped the Cardinals outscore the Bulldogs 18-4 in the second frame. It would seem that Osborne had control of the game with a 37-14 lead at the half, but Morgan County adjusted in the third.

"In the third quarter, we came out lackadaisically defensively," Jenkins said. "(Morgan County's) guards were doing a good job getting the ball inside the post, and they were handling our pressure."

The Bulldogs caught Osborne off guard in the third quarter with a quick 8-0 capped by a pair of foul shots from Calhoun. Then Marquis Brown hit a layup midway through the third to cut Osborne's lead from 27 points down to 13. Osborne, however, did not allow Morgan County to close the gap any further in the third.

After Calhoun hit one of two free-throw attempts to cut Osborne's lead to 12 early in the fourth quarter, the Cardinals reverted back to their second-quarter ways. Norris responded with a jumper, and Spear's 3-pointer in the middle of the fourth put the Cardinals back up by 17, making another rally difficult for the Bulldogs. Defensively, Jenkins said they put more pressure on Calhoun.

"We just lost focus (in the third quarter)," Spear said. "That's all." The Cardinals triggered a 6-0 run during the final 2 minutes of the game to seal the victory. Jackson sank a pair of free throws and put the finishing touches on Morgan County with a layup in the final minute.

"The thing I was proud of our kids about was that when (Morgan County) made another run, we kept our composure and didn't try to force things," Jenkins said. "They tried to press (late in the fourth), but we did a good job breaking their press."

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