

## Falcons swoop past Hamilton

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It had to appear as if Aiken snuck a couple of extra players on the court as its full-court pressure suffocated Hamilton into submission as the Falcons advanced in the OHSAA Division I boys' sectionals with the 81-59 victory at Fifth Third Arena on the campus of the University of Cincinnati.

A late run by Hamilton, with both team's reserves on the court, kept the Big Blue from surpassing their largest loss of the season - a 27-point defeat to Princeton in early February.

With yellow jersey's swarming Ed Jucker Court, Hamilton found it difficult to get open shots or even advance the ball into the paint. The couple times they were fortunate enough to get shots at the basket, they either missed or had them rejected by lanky senior Kenny Knight. The 6-7 forward finished with three blocks officially, all in the first half.

Hamilton really did its greatest work on the offensively glass, amassing 12 offensive boards - including nine in the first half. The second, and sometimes third efforts, only equaled 14 points on the scoreboard.

In the end it was Aiken's transition offense, off misses and makes, that delivered the final blows to this game midway through the third quarter.

"We talked all week about getting three guys back," said Hamilton head coach Tim Robinson. "We got a little lazy getting back. And when you let them beat you down the court, they are going to score. They are not a nine-seed."

Aiken quickly took advantage of the Hamilton zone blazing the nets for three straight from behind the arc to open the early lead. When the Falcons weren't hitting the open three, they were stifling the Big Blue full court.

"When they started making three's and we had to go man, we were in big trouble," said Robinson. "They had a couple guys that are really good off the bounce."

Junior Aaron Thomas helped sparked an Aiken 10-3 run with back-to-back fastbreak lay-ups and added two free throws in the spurt as AHS opened the game's first double-digit lead.

"We put a lot of work in our shooting," said Aiken head coach Leon Ellison. "With Nick (McCoy) and Ronmel Hicks, we know teams are going to try and pack it in on us. We have four or five guys that can really shoot it."

The lead continued to swell, finally cresting at 22 points after a fastbreak basket by Hicks late in the first half.

Thomas accounted for a team-high 20 points, seven boards and four assists in the victory. McCoy and Hicks, who will be teammates next season at Kentucky State University, added 14 and 13 points, respectively.

Robert Merz led the way for Hamilton with 15 points and four assists, while Jake Turner chipped in with 10 points.

Aiken (14-7) advances to play the winner of the Moeller 8 p.m. Saturday, while the Big Blue finishes the 2009-2010 campaign at 6-16.