

# **KENOSHA NEWS**

## **West Allis Hale surges past Panthers**

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WEST ALLIS — The Wilmot boys basketball team will have to get over it. It could be easier said than done.

For the fourth time this season, the Panthers could not take advantage of the opportunity to move two games over .500. Leading with 41/2 minutes to play, the Panthers saw a West Allis Hale reserve guard score eight points in 1 minute, 19 seconds and lost to the Huskies, 68-61, in the championship game of the Hale Holiday Tournament on Friday afternoon.

Sotiros a force

Nick Sotiros, a 6-foot-1 junior, six scored of the points on drives and the other two from about eight feet along the left baseline to give the 3-5 Huskies a 59-53 lead with 2:52 to play. Wilmot (4-4) closed to 59-56 and 61-58, but never had the ball with the chance to tie.

“Give (Sotiros) credit,” Wilmot coach Terry Bruton said. “The kid went to the basket and made some tough shots. That was the difference, right there. It was anybody’s ballgame until that happened.”

It was a big victory for the Hale program, which ended a 61-game losing streak in February. Hale had lost 32 games in a row on its home court before Thursday’s victory over Brookfield Academy.

“This is obviously something new for us,” said Sotiros, in his third year on the varsity. “This is our first winning streak in four years. This is very exciting for the program, shows that we’re getting back to where we need to be.”

Hale made its first four field-goal attempts and nine of its first 16 to open a 21-13 lead. A 3-point basket by junior guard Andrew Lartey late in the first quarter started an 11-0 run that gave the Panthers the lead.

Struggles from the line

Wilmot would have been in better shape had it bettered its 7-of-13 effort from the free-throw line. Senior forward Cal Rohrman made a pair to give Wilmot a 30-27 lead with 1:50 left in the half. Hale scored the final five points — two on Steve Kopet’s basket at the buzzer — to take the lead into the break.

Hale scored the first six points of the second half to go up, 38-30, and eventually built its biggest lead at 41-32. Wilmot trailed 48-43 after three.

Matt Betz made a 3-point basket, Chris Nelson scored six points and Doug Edmonds made the second of two free throws as Wilmot took advantage of five turnovers to take a 53-51 lead with 4:25 to play.

That set the stage for Sotiros.

“We really came into this game like we can get a win,” said Nelson, who scored a game-high 23 points. “We should have won. We should have won this game. We’re going to go back to the drawing board and fix some things, and come out and turn things around.”

Sophomore guard Brandon Schattner had 11 points for Wilmot.

Junior swingman Travis Balcerzak led Hale with 16 points. Sotiros finished with 14 and junior guard Derrick Waller scored 10 of his 12 points in the first quarter.