

## **SAVAGE PLAY LEADS OLD MILL PAST BROADNECK IN 4A EAST QUARTERFINALS**

**Freshman scores 16 points to lead quartet of Patriots in double figures; Old Mill to host fourth-seeded Severna Park on Thursday.**

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By Evan Roe

It was a situation not unfamiliar to Old Mill seniors Brandon Riley and Deonte Puller.

Anne Arundel County champions vying for a third trip in four years to the Comcast Center, their Patriots still needed to get past their first opponent of the 4A East Region playoffs. That experience is why it came as no surprise to see both players score in double figures in a gritty showdown with ninth-seeded Broadneck on Tuesday night.

The real surprise was that despite their combined seven years of varsity experience playing for head coach Greg Smith, it was the effort of one newcomer that made the biggest difference come game time.

Freshman guard Eric Savage, playing in the first high school playoff game of his life, knocked down four of five 3-point attempts and totaled 16 points to lead the Patriots to a 74-63 victory over an underdog Bruin squad playing with nothing to lose.

"He stepped up huge for us tonight," said Smith, whose team improved to 22-2. "He answered a couple times [when] they hit big shots, then he hit a big shot. Definitely I wouldn't be standing here if he wouldn't have played the way he played tonight."

"Those shots felt great. I felt confident in my shot and that's all it really is," said Savage, who went on to say that his first season has been "a great ride so far."

The Patriots jumped out to a narrow 14-12 first-quarter lead despite being grossly outrebounded, 11-2, in the period—an early indicator of what amounted to a very lopsided effort on the boards for Broadneck.

That was one of the key reasons the Bruins were able to keep the score close until the waning minutes: they had as many second-chance opportunities (19) as the Patriots had total rebounds, with the visitors snagging 38 total rebounds of their own.

Additionally, the Bruin offense seemed to handle Old Mill's infamous full-court press well in the game's first two quarters, passing safely out of half-court traps to find open men near the basket.

Those elements combined to create a tug-of-war battle in the first half that saw five ties and nine lead changes before the teams went into the break knotted at 34 points apiece.

"I thought we came out a little bit sluggish," said Smith. "...I told the kids that we need the same emotion every game because every game's a county championship game now. Here you're one-and-done so you're going to go home. I think they just came out a little bit more ready than we did and it took us the first half to kind of realize that if we don't get the job done, then we're not going to be talking about practice tomorrow."

The speech worked.

Immediately, A.J. Mann nailed a 3-pointer to put the Patriots up, 37-34. After that shot, the Bruins never regained the lead, managing to tie just two more times in the game as Old Mill's pressure defense started to get to them, cracking the Bruins' rhythm.

"We were trying to shorten the game, and I thought we did with certain possessions where we really worked the clock and got some quality shots. But then at times we panicked and showed our inexperience in certain positions," said Williams, whose team led most by six points in the second period before Old Mill stormed back.

"In a game like that, every possession counts, and we had mental lapses on certain possessions."

Old Mill opened up its largest lead with just under a minute to play in the game on a putback by Riley that made score 70-58, capping a 12-2 run. The guard had three assists and 11 points, but most importantly went a perfect 4-for-4 on free throws in the closing minute. He was one of four double-digit scorers for the Patriots, who also had Savage score 16 points, while Mann and Puller each scored 14.

Mann, a 5-foot-8 transfer from Severn, had six assists and three steals from his point guard position, while sophomore Mike Holley had four assists off the bench. Savage, Puller and standout football player Marvin Pinkney each had four rebounds. Chris Day scored nine points, senior Wayne Spriggs scored seven and Pinkney had three points

Broadneck (16-8) got 16 points and four 3-pointers from a freshman of its own: 5-foot-10 Trae Byes. He shared the scoring load with seniors Mike Atkins (16 points, four rebounds, three assists) and Kevin Hunt (12 points, 13 rebounds, four assists). Junior Derrick McGee chipped in seven points and seven rebounds, C.J. Ricker had six points and three rebounds and Russell Jacobsen had four points, four assists and three rebounds.

**Old Mill 74, Broadneck 63**

**BN:** Atkins (2-2) 16, Byes (2-2) 16, Hunt (0-2) 12, Jacobsen (0-0) 4, Lovett (0-0) 2, McGee (1-2) 7, Ricker (0-0) 6. **Totals: (5-8) 63.**

**OM:** Day (2-2) 9, Mann (4-6) 14, Pinkney (1-2) 3, Puller (2-6) 14, Riley (5-7) 11, Savage (0-0) 16, Spriggs (0-0) 7. **Totals: (14-23) 74.**

**BN** 12 22 12 17-----63

**OM** 14 20 19 21-----74

**Half: Tie 34-34.**