

**TROTTER MAKES WINNING LAY-UP AT THE BUZZER, OBLACHINSKI 13 REBOUNDS, 17 POINTS**

# Cougar Boys Rope Mustangs in Four OT Marathon, 86-85

By **DAVID B. CORBIN**

*Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

Quadruple overtime! Who would have “thunk” it? With his team trailing by one point, senior guard Tommy Trotter grabbed a rebound after a missed lay-up attempt, dribbled the full length of the court and rolled in a lay-up as time ran out to give the Cranford High School boys basketball team an emotionally charged 86-85 victory over the Marlboro Mustangs after four overtime periods in the opening round of the Cougar Classic in Cranford on December 22.

“I have never ever played a game that long,” commented Trotter.

Trotter, who also had seven assists, scored half of his 22 points in the overtime periods, and senior forward John Oblachinski, who grabbed eight of his team-leading 13 rebounds in overtime, finished with 17 points and five assists. Mike Guarriello netted 20 points and pulled seven rebounds. Cameron Kutzer had five points and five rebounds. Luke Christiano scored eight of his 14 points in overtime, Jack McCaffrey sank six points and Jack Schetelich added two points.

The Mustangs sank eight 3-pointers, all but one in regulation, and junior guard Kenny LaRocca sank four of them. Justin Markowitz bucketed three 3-pointers and led the team with 24 points. Big man Matt Ringel, who led his team in rebounds,

put in 13 points.

“They were hitting a lot, especially that number 11, but we settled down and covered him,” Trotter said.

The Cougars won the first quarter, 13-11, and all of their points were accompanied with assists. However, the Mustangs were making headway with multiple

steals. The Mustangs continued their success with thefts and also nailed three 3-pointers to win the second quarter, 11-8, to take a slim, 22-21, lead at the half.

“They were getting the steals early. They were reaching a lot, but the refs weren’t calling them,” Trotter said.

The Mustangs stretched their

banged a 3-pointer to close the gap to 39-38.

The emotional seesaw teetered more in the fourth quarter and the Cougars grabbed a 44-42 lead with 5:28 on the clock. Less than two minutes later, the Mustangs seized a 47-46 lead. A little later, Oblachinski fed Trotter, who nailed a 3-pointer to put the Cougars in

Trotter’s second 3-pointer at the end of the first overtime yielded an 8-8 score, but the Cougars, once again, struggled at the free throw line. The second overtime appeared to be the final one as the Cougars took a 68-65 lead. but Markowitz sank a 3-pointer with 9.4 on the clock.

“There was a point, I think in the second overtime, that I thought we were going to win, but things happened and they came back,” Trotter said.

The third quarter was mostly spent at the charity line, and the Cougars failed to capitalize as each team netted only four points.

“Yes! We weren’t hitting our free throws. We must have been five for 20. That’s one thing we are going to work on in all our practices,” Trotter said.

The seesaw was banging at each end throughout the fourth overtime, but the Cougars hit four free throws and a lay-up to grab an 83-79 lead with 38 seconds remaining. Calamity struck within seven seconds when the Mustangs hit two free throws then immediately converted a steal to a lay-up to knot the score.

Trotter was fouled and sank one of his two free throws, but the Mustangs sank a free throw then drew another foul with 6.3 seconds remaining sending Markowitz to the line. He sank his first but missed his second. Trotter took care of business from there.

“I didn’t want to go through another overtime and I did not want to lose. I had to finish it. I’m exhausted,” Trotter said.



*Story on page 9 of The Westfield Leader*

David B. Corbin for *The Westfield Leader and The Times*

**MARATHON GAME...Cougar Mike Guarriello, No. 3, keeps close tabs on a Marlboro Mustang during the Cougar Classic in Cranford on December 27. The Cougars pulled out an 86-85 victory in quadruple overtime.**

lead to 39-31 with a few minutes remaining in the third quarter, but Guarriello and Oblachinski both hit 2-pointers and Trotter

front, 51-49, with 59 seconds remaining. Matt Ringel drew a foul and sank both free throws to send the game into overtime. During that quarter, the Cougars missed a pair of free throws that could have ended the game.

<b>Marlboro</b>	11	11	17	12	51
<b>Cranford</b>	13	8	17	13	51
<b>OVERTIME:</b>					
<b>Marlboro</b>	8	9	4	13	85
<b>Cranford</b>	8	9	4	14	86



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