

Sports

THE REMATCH

Newton gets last laugh

Scott's reverse lay-in completes improbable comeback for Rams

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The Newton High School boys' basketball team found its reprisal Friday night, and it came with an historical comeback attached.

Vincent Scott glided between two defenders and scored on a reverse lay-up with four seconds remaining as the Rams roared back from a 20-point halftime deficit to stun Eastside 59-57 before a standing-room-only crowd at Newton High School.

Eastside (18-5, 6-2 Region 8-AAAA South) held a 55-41 advantage with 5:49 remaining and squandered it. Newton (17-6, 5-3) scored 18 of the game's final 20 points and took its only lead of the game on Scott's go-ahead lay-up.

"You just don't believe you can come back and win when you're down 20 at halftime," said Newton head coach Ron Bradley. "It's one of the greatest comebacks we've ever been a part of. Our kids wouldn't quit, and I can't tell you how proud I am of them."

Eastside head coach Tommy McWhorter felt helpless in the face of a monumental momentum swing.

"We've never really been in that situation before," McWhorter said. "I've got to take my hat off to Newton. We just didn't seal the deal, and they did. Maybe if I had had 10 timeouts, it would have been different."

Scott poured in 18 points and ripped down 10 rebounds for the Rams, who won for the fourth time in five meetings between the two schools. Jerrell Boswell scored 22 points to lead all scorers, draining six three-pointers in the second half to ignite the improbable Newton comeback.

Still, Eastside had the game in its hands and let it slip away.

The Eagles led 57-44 with 3:35 to go in regulation when they began to wilt under the duress of full-court pressure. Newton scored 13 consecutive points in a 2:34-span to draw even at 57-57 with 1:01 remaining. Justin Herring forced the last of Eastside's four fourth-quarter turnovers six seconds later, allowing the Rams to play for what would be the game's final shot. Bradley's decision to press paid the ultimate dividend.

"You're down 20 ... you've got to get them out of their comfort zone," Bradley said. "We were able to take them out of it. They made some mistakes and started thinking everything was going wrong when we were thinking everything was going right."

The post-halftime collapse overshadowed what had been, to that point, a seamless performance from the Eagles.

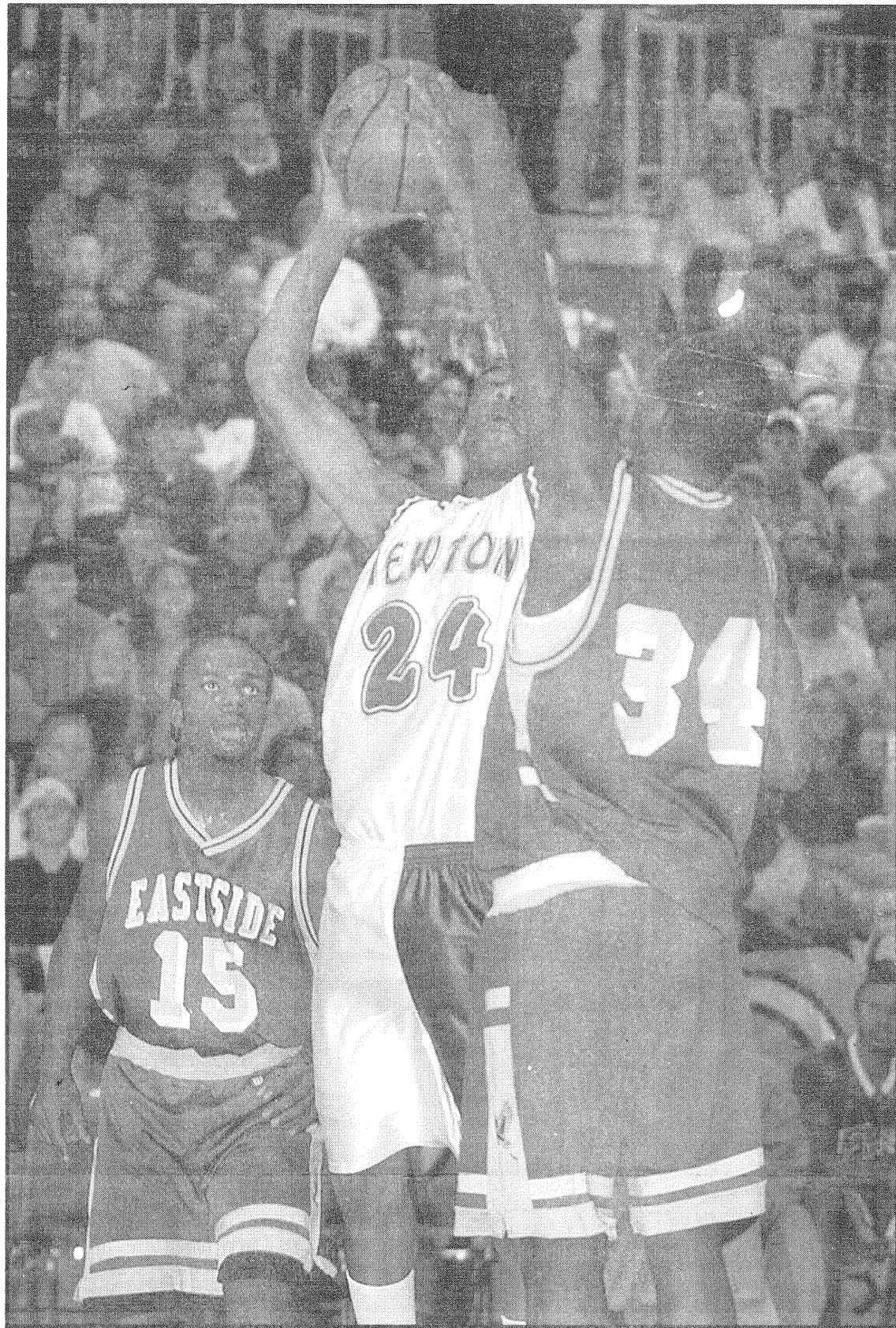
Eastside went 10-for-16 from three-point territory in the first half, outscoring the Rams 20-7 in the second period. The Eagles went to the locker room with a 40-20 edge at the break.

"They dominated us in every way," Bradley said. "But the well ran dry, and it's a four-quarter game."

Jamario Vonner pumped in 13 points, ripped down seven rebounds and recorded six assists to pace four Eastside players in double figures. Marquis Gilstrap and Tyler Fisher pitched in with 12 points apiece, and Marchellius Smith chipped in with 11 as the Eagles saw their six-game winning streak and the momentum that surrounded it come crashing down around them.

White struck for 15 points, took down seven rebounds and had six assists for the Rams, who committed only five turnovers in the game. His night included a thunderous two-handed dunk off an offensive rebound in the first half, and he assisted on Scott's game-clinching lay-in.

Newton meets Salem at 7:30 p.m. tonight at Salem High School in Conyers. Eastside, meanwhile, challenges arch rival Loganville at 7:30 p.m. tonight at



Anthony Banks/The Covington News

Athlete against athlete: Newton's Darius White (No. 24) attempts to shoot over the outstretched arm of Eastside's Jamario Vonner (No. 34) as Marshall Wright (No. 15) looks on Friday night.

Coach vows not to let defeat dictate season

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The Eastside High School boys' basketball team has more than enough incentive to play through Friday night's 59-57 defeat at Newton, even after coughing up a 20-point lead.

The Eagles (18-5, 6-2 Region 8-AAAA South) can still clinch the No. 1 seed out of the subregion with a victory in one of their two final games against Loganville and Rockdale County. Both games will be played at Eastside High School, where the Eagles have won 33 of their last 37 games.



MCWHORTER

Eastside clinch, the Eagles would secure a bye in the first round of the Region 8-AAAA Tournament and would host a tournament quarterfinal with a berth in the state playoffs on the line.

McWhorter believes his team could learn a valuable lesson

what our number one objective is," said Eastside head coach Tommy McWhorter. "It's up to the coaches to get them re-focused on that."

Should Eastside clinch, the Eagles would secure a bye in the first round of the Region 8-AAAA Tournament and would host a tournament quarterfinal with a berth in the state playoffs on the line.

McWhorter believes his team could learn a valuable lesson

with 5:49 to play. Better now, he says, than in postseason.

"We've got to learn how to finish a game," McWhorter said. "Nobody's going to roll over and give you anything."

Eastside committed three turnovers in the final two minutes in its dramatic defeat to the Rams. The Eagles built a 40-20 cushion in the first half, sinking 10 three-pointers but made just two of their eight attempts from beyond the arc after the break.

"You don't increase leads by shooting jumpshots," McWhorter said. "You increase leads by attacking the basket and getting to the [foul] line. We didn't

Nat Harwell
Sports Columnist

Rivalry 1 out good ugly before sold-out

My wife and I Newton High Newton and Eastside basketball Friday night there early, found a parking lot to the gym

Six females sat on from the top, leaving wide space on the rig which literally hundreds were trying to squeeze to the top. That irrita stopped right in front their attention and pe if they could find jus to sit down with ther successfully blockad width of the steps, ar at all could use them looked at me, amaze guy would say such : didn't move, though, point entirely. My wi wouldn't create a sce on past the girls, and other unacceptable th society these days, I.

We sat at mid-cou the scorers' table. Be the girls' game the g to standing room onl ing, actually. I put th about 3,000.

As we took our se varsity boys' game w halftime. I realized I into a cloud of negat blocking the path anc students trying to rur keep the official scor combined to irritate r attempted to focus on good things happenir

Michael West, hea Newton girls' basket swept the floor. You much anymore, give head coaches think o just a notch below R Known Universe. It to see the unpretentic sweeping the floor p sity games.

Then the varsity g ed. Three Lady Eagl last basketball team l Indian Creek Middle was hoping Amy By Largeman and April have a good outing.



Mike West gets some valuable second-half minutes out of his second unit against Eastside.

Newton reserves pull their weight

Lett sparks bench in 56-20 victory

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The Newton High School girls' basketball team earned some valuable minutes for its relatively untested bench Friday night.

Firing on all cylinders, the Lady Rams opened the game on a 37-0 run (with 35 of those points coming from the starting five) and left Eastside in their wake in a 56-20 win at Newton High School.

With his team in complete control from the second quarter on, Newton head coach Mike West used the opportunity to get his reserves some playing time.

"I think it was great for us," West said. "Some of those kids never get to play. We practice with 11 kids every day, and they bust their butts knowing they're not going to get to play much."

Newton's second unit more than held its own, accounting for 19 of the team's 21 second-half points. TeTe Lett struck for eight points and three steals, drilling a pair of three-pointers to spearhead the reserves. She moved the Lady Rams in front 52-9 with 6:18 to go in regulation when she knocked down a picture-perfect shot from beyond the three-point arc.

Takarie Belcher, Shanetria Hill, Nikki Sanders, Mya Speaks and Ivana Whitter also gave West a chance to look at his bench under fire, in the heat of battle.

"For them to go out and play the way they did, it was a great honor for them," West said. "You bide your time all season, and to play well when you get the chance means a lot."

With the region and state playoffs fast approaching, West now has a better idea of whom he can and cannot call on in the event of injury or foul trouble.

"Let's face it, right now you're going to go with seven or eight kids, whether you like it or not," West said. "They'll be better prepared when the time comes."

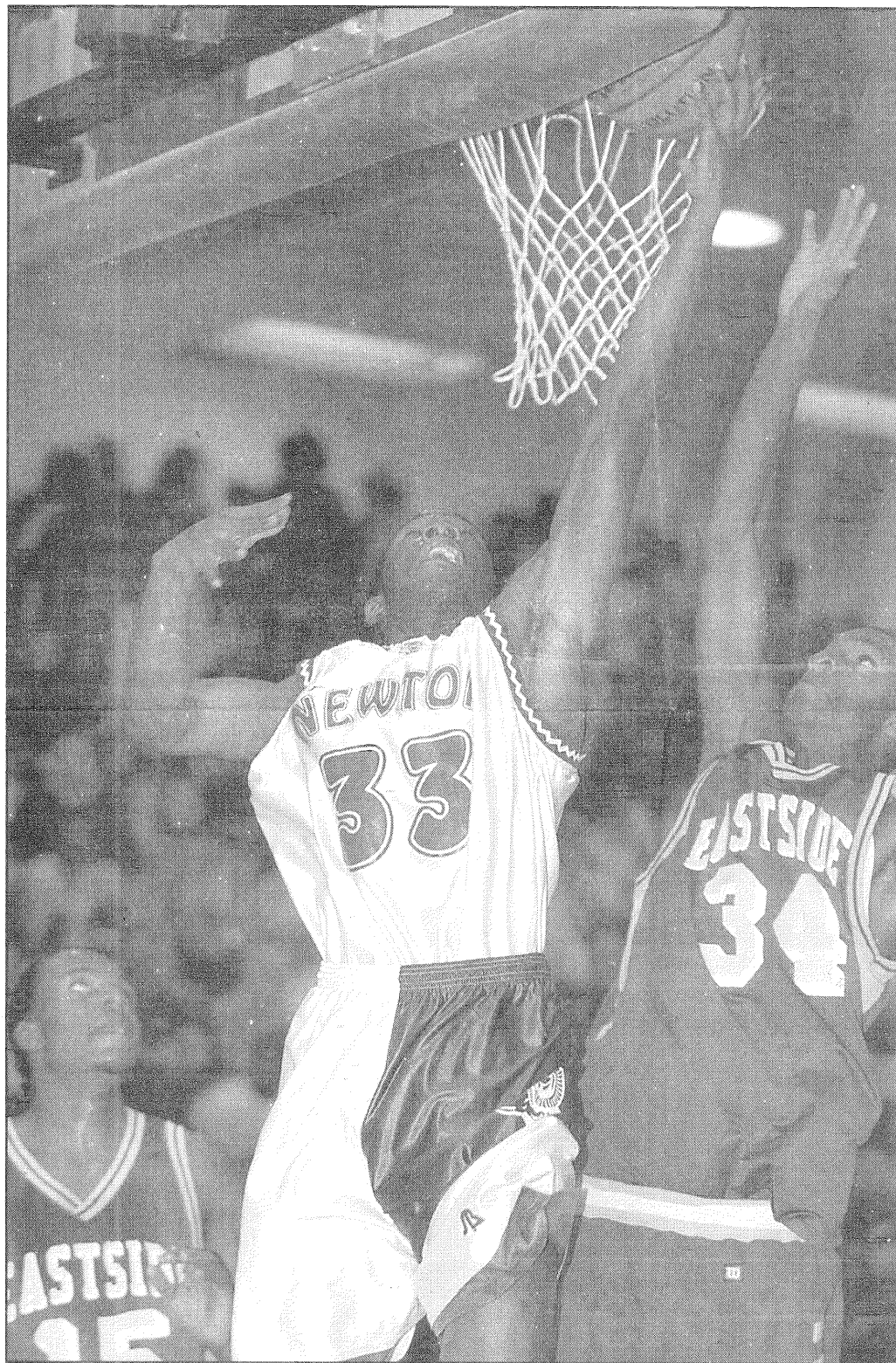
Nine different players scored for Newton, which extended its home floor winning streak to 15 games. Only Whitter did not score, but she pulled down three rebounds and had an assist.

The Newton bench accounted for nine of the team's 28 steals and six of its 10 assists. The reserves shot a respectable 7-for-18 from the field.

"You hear coaches all the time talking about how hard their kids work in practice," West said. "I really do have kids who work hard in practice."

Act of redemption

Scott erases memory of missed FT with last-second re



Anthony Banks/The Covington News

Trademark shot: Newton's Vincent Scott (No. 33) scores on a reverse lay-up as Eastside's Jamario Vonner defends Friday night. Scott later hit the game-winner with a similar shot.

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Redemption met Vincent Scott in the middle Friday night.

Scott scored the game-winner, splitting two defenders and converting a reverse lay-up with four seconds left in regulation as the Newton High School boys' basketball team downed Eastside 59-57 at Newton High School.

The game marked a drastic turnaround in fortune for Scott, who had failed to put Eastside away two weeks prior, missing the front end of a golden one-and-one opportunity at the foul line in the waning seconds of a 51-50 defeat.

This time, he did not miss his chance.

"I hit shots like that all the time in practice," Scott said. "I thought about going up strong with it, but something just told me to reverse it."

The 6-foot-1 senior scored six of Newton's final eight points, accounting for both the game-tying and game-winning baskets. He vividly remembers standing at the free throw line on Jan. 16 and watching Jamario Vonner streak down the court unmolested for a last-second hoop after his failed conversion.

"I was one of the reasons he hit that shot," Scott said. "I told myself it wasn't going to happen again. We wanted this one."

Newton head coach Ron Bradley thinks fate shined on the right player.

"He deserved to make the winning basket," said Bradley, whose team improved to 17-6 (5-3 Region 8-AAAA South).

"That's what a wants to do. You up and try again."

As the only low-post presence Rams, the reveal become a staple repertoire around Newton coach Bradley. Interestingly, he warned him again too often.

"He does a good job going across [Bradley] said. "I told him all the time because we feel it a little too many times. He picks the time to use it."

Had Scott not directed to the shot likely would have been blocked.

Scott, one of more cerebral players once shied away from the blame after the schools met. Bradley saw that the senior the adversity was his responsibility.

"There's not you can say in like that," Bradley he shot it and he going in, that's ask. If not, he himself a chance time. I don't know was swirling around head when he shot or not."

Scott made a few tries from the free throw line. Newton extend streak to three; two-point victory down 10 rebound second half) as stormed back into down in the fourth win.

Harwell: Game security leaves much to be desired

From page 9

It was not to be.

Instead, I saw something I'd never seen before, and I've been attending, playing and coaching high school athletics for more than 40 years. Newton opened a 35-0 halftime lead on Eastside. I mean, I've never seen a high school varsity team shut completely out for an entire half of play, until Friday night. I still can't believe it.

West is a class act, though. He kept his starters in until Eastside finally earned two points in the third minute of the third quarter. He then pulled his starters and let his substitutes go the rest of the way. He could have really run up the score, but he's not like that. Plus, it will help down the road that his reserves got some playing time.

The boys' game got started soon after. Amazingly, Newton athletic director Tracey Curtis grabbed the microphone and made an announcement, directing fans to stay seated so that others behind them could see the

game. That pretty much was the dumbest announcement I've heard at any ball game in 40 years. Fans pay their money to come to the game and cheer for their team. If they want to stand up and yell, fine. If the folks behind them want to see, they can stand up, too. That's the way it's been ever since Dr. Naismith invented the game. I mean, if you want to sit, watch it on television.

Not long after that announcement, the entire second row of the Newton student section unfurled a 30-foot-long sign which bore a tremendously negative message with sexual overtones, directed explicitly at the Eastside girls. Although Curtis and another Newton teacher immediately moved to confiscate the sign, no students were removed from the gym.

It's been my experience that each and every time Newton and Eastside have played, Newton students have displayed these kinds of negative behaviors. It's reprehensible. I have no idea if Principal Dave Easterday is following through with any kind of punitive action toward those who

perpetrated the deed, nor do I care. The fact is that this kind of negative behavior has been consistently displayed by Newton kids toward Eastside kids. It hasn't been stopped, and it needs to be.

I mean, if you're going to tell people they have to sit at a basketball game, surely you can tell them not to make and display offensive signs.

Eastside nearly ran Newton out of the gym, jumping out to a 20-point halftime lead. But head coach Tommy McWhorter's Eagles couldn't hang on, as Ron Bradley's Rams came charging back in the second half to take a hard-fought, down-to-the-wire victory.

After experiencing some good, some bad and some ugly over a three-hour period, my wife and I exited the building. We walked right into a huge conflict between students, which roiled down the entrance corridor, with hundreds of students flailing down the slope and steps to the lower parking lot. The fight spilled around the parked cars and swirled around innocent folks who were just

trying to go home.

I was supposed to write an interest column about the event. I envisioned an effort to promote the need for Newton side to continue playing out, I felt really lucky to be able to get out of there going to fight my way out. When the brouhaha era wasn't a constable in sight, I've been maybe a dozen of the gym overseeing the egress, and there were people directing traffic. But he plumber on a Sunday a

There are some serious Competition between Newton Eastside is a great thing times can high school kids before a packed house?

But the aberrant behavior stop, and the kids have they have to behave. Oh is no hope for a continuation between these schools.

Oh, and one last thing tell me I can't stand up basketball game.

Sports

Words can't describe where rivals have taken

What else can be said about a time, about a series, that must be experienced to be believed? I have no words with which to do this justice, other than to say the Newton-Eastside rivalry has become the most memorable and challenging aspect of my modest journalistic career. They've met four times in two years. We've had last-second shots, press matches between proven athletes and, now, an historic comeback in a game that stands among the greatest ever played on Newton's hallowed soil. The Newton High School boys' basketball team, serving as underdog for the first time ever in the series, rose from the dead to score the game's final 15 points and defeat Eastside 59-57 at Newton High

School Friday night. It will mean something different to every person lucky enough to have been there in person to see it. Some will see it as an unbelievable comeback by a team that led only once the entire game. Others will view it as a collapse of epic proportions by a team that seemingly had everything going for it. I guess I see it as a little bit of both. Eastside played almost perfectly the first half. Tyler Fisher, Marquis Gilstrap, Marchellius Smith and Jamario Vonner combined for 35 of the team's 40 points — an incredible 30 of those points coming on the strength of 10 three-pointers — as the Eagles buried Newton under an avalanche of long-range shots. They led 40-20 at the half, having deliv-



ered what appeared to be the kill shot before the game ever reached crunch time. They had not. Newton cut the margin to 10 ever so subtly by the end of the third period, and the Eagles slowly began to tighten up. Momentum left them. They felt what we felt. The Rams, once clearly out of it, were gaining

steam, like a snowball barreling down a mountainside. Newton outscored Eastside 21-9 in the fourth quarter (15-0 over the final 3:35), and Vincent Scott completed the turnaround with a nifty reverse lay-up in traffic with four seconds to go. Perhaps it was only justice evening itself out. Scott, if you recall, failed to convert the front end of a one-and-one with 4.6 seconds left in the first memorable matchup between the two schools this season. The missed free throw led to a last-second lay-up that gave Eastside a 51-50 win. No one could explain the outcome in scientific terms, not even Newton head coach Ron Bradley, the author of more than 1,200 victories ... few as unlikely as this one. I couldn't sleep in the hot glow of the game, still wounding about a rivalry that somehow living up to the hype, about teams who give us one-time memory after another. This is at the top of my list. Some games defy logic, a certain was one of them. "Over," I remember saying to when Marquis Gilstrap floated corner and drilled a three-pointer from the baseline that put Eastside front by 14 points with 5:49 left. Well, as has been proven time and again, it's never over. I had a feeling what was in store for the captivated crowd that had gathered, lined up catwalks behind the seating area. Neither did anyone else. What we saw was a miracle.

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he hit that shot," Scott said. "I told myself it wasn't going to happen again. We wanted this one." Newton head coach Ron Bradley thinks fate shined on the right player. "He deserved to make the winning basket," said Bradley, whose team improved to 17-6 (5-3 Region 8-AAAA South). Scott made eight of ... tries from the field ... of his free throw atten ... Newton extended its w ... streak to three games i ... two-point victory. He j ... down 10 rebounds (six ... second half) as the Rai ... stormed back from 14 ... down in the fourth per ... win.