

## DEVILS

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Layne said. "We did a really good job in the second half, frustrating them and not giving them open shots. We were able to get in gaps. We also made the extra pass many times tonight. We've really been working on making that one extra pass. I'm just so proud of my group tonight for playing collectively as they did and being able to get open shots."

The Lions went scoreless for 5:38 of game time across the third and fourth quarters, including the final 3:57 of the third frame.

"When you come down, and the shot doesn't fall, it's tough to get back up the next play to grind and play defense," Groves said.

"That's a growth area for us. Our defensive intensity started slacking a little



KEVIN GOLDY | FOR THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

**Boyd County's Jada Ray finds a driving lane along the baseline past Russell's Kenley Kouns Monday.**

bit as our shots didn't fall, so we've got to grow there."

Kennedy Darnell led the Red Devils with 19 points, going 8 of 15 from the field.

Lily Ervin and Kenley Kouns both took advantage of trips to the free

throw line, collecting 13 points for Russell between the two from the charity stripe.

Including Darnell, Kouns, and Ervin, the Red Devils had five players in double-figures, with Kamryn Fleming and Gabby Oborne

rounding out the quintet.

Darnell and Kouns both had double-doubles.

Both teams turned up their offensive production in the second quarter, after entering the frame tied 10-all.

Russell was either

trailing or knotted up for much of the first half, until a bucket from Darnell put her team on top by one with just under three minutes to go until halftime.

A well-timed 3 from Fleming late in the second frame helped put Russell in the lead 30-27 going into the locker room.

Kollyn Groves recorded nine points in the second stanza for the Lions. She finished as the game's high scorer with 22 points.

With the postseason awaiting at the end of the month, Layne hopes the win builds the intensity for her squad.

"Like I always say, I want them to play hard every possession and not give them any free points," Layne said. "I also thought we did a much better job on the boards tonight. I'm really proud of that."

Even though the outing was tough for the Lions, Groves knows there are

plenty of lessons from the loss.

"I hope we see the difference in settling on the offensive end versus making sure we're valuing the possession and getting the best shot on the floor," Groves said. "You've got to be thinking about the next play: get up, play defense, guard, and value the possession. We need to get our best shot, not just our first shot."

BOYD CO.	FG	FT	REB	TP
Groves	8-16	3-5	2	22
Ray	8-27	2-2	4	19
Boyd	1-8	1-2	8	4
C. Blankenship	1-1	0-0	0	3
May	1-2	0-0	0	0
Lykins	1-1	0-0	2	2
Phipps	0-0	0-0	2	0
K. Blankenship	0-2	0-0	0	0
TEAM				8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20-57</b>	<b>6-9</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>52</b>

FG Pct.: 35.1. FT Pct.: 66.6. 3-pointers: 6-31 (Groves 3-6, C. Blankenship 1-1, Boyd 1-7, Ray 1-5, K. Blankenship 0-2).

PF: 20. Fouled out: May. Turnovers: 13.

RUSSELL	FG	FT	REB	TP
Darnell	8-15	3-3	12	19
Ervin	3-8	6-6	2	13
Fleming	5-8	2-2	5	12
Oborne	4-12	2-4	4	12
Kouns	1-9	7-10	11	19
Troxler	0-1	0-0	3	0
TEAM				4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21-53</b>	<b>20-25</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>67</b>

FG Pct.: 39.6. FT Pct.: 80. 3-pointers: 6-31 (Oborne 3-6, Fleming 1-1, Ervin 1-2, Kouns 1-4, Darnell 1-2). PF: 12. Fouled out: None. Turnovers: 10.

BOYD CO. 10 17 6 19 — 52

RUSSELL 10 20 13 24 — 67

Officials: Tucker Conway, Charlie Graham, PD Harris.

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## DUO

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the Rams. Clark posted a pair of buckets and Smith dropped in six during the spurt, including a steal and a coast-to-coast layup to extend the Ashland lead to 41-35.

Point guard Elijah Neel suffered an ankle injury during Monday's practice. The junior watched the game in a walking boot, so establishing a new offensive rhythm can take time.

"It was tough in the first half because we aren't used to that, sustaining it for that long," Bonner said. "Jaylan Strader has run the point for us all year, and it got more comfortable as the game went on. We used spacing as our best friend. Fortunately, we put five guys on the floor who can

attack off the dribble. We used that to our advantage, especially in the second half."

Raceland (17-10) responded with a run of its own. The margin grew to nine points to open the fourth quarter, but the Rams rattled off seven points in a row midway through the final frame, with consecutive buckets from Charles Welch and Eli Caines, along with a quick long 3 by Jonah Arnett.

Arnett scored a team-high 16 points. Welch produced another efficient night with 12 points and Jake Waller added nine.

"They got up, but this group is really resilient," Bryan said. "I thought they responded well. It's a game of runs. They know that, and we preach that to them. A six or eight-point run can happen in a big game sometimes. You just have to

respond the right way and I thought our kids did that tonight."

Raceland cut the deficit to two, so Ashland turned to the 3. Smith and Clarke delivered four triples on four straight possessions. It helped ignite a decisive 14-3 closing run, giving the home team their biggest lead of the game at 60-47 with a minute remaining.

Clarke used his quickness to get to the rim after early shooting struggles. It led to shooting space, and the senior took advantage in the second half.

"At halftime, I tried to bring our guys together," Clarke said, "and motivate them. I focused on the controllables: rebounding the ball, playing hard, and giving effort on every possession.

"At first, they started guarding me up high," he added. "When they started sagging off

on me a little bit, that's when I started to show them what I could do from the 3-point line. I think it definitely paid off."

Clarke tallied a game-high 27 points and Smith followed close behind with 25. Alijah Owens supplied nine points.

"What I'm most proud of with Caleb, he wasn't hitting shots in the first half," Bonner said, "but he made those shots in the second half when it really mattered and we really needed them. Those clutch 3s were huge for us."

Smith was 9 of 15 from the field and splashed four from long range, but the team can always lean on his toughness.

"He was another guy that hit some big shots in the second half," Bonner said. "And that's what we've kind of been missing up to this point, is those clutch possessions where we have to get a really

good look. I felt like tonight we really got over the hump. We made plays when we needed them."

Ashland (17-7) travels to Lawrence County and Bell County to close the regular season before district tournament play next week.

RACELAND	FG	FT	REB	TP
Caines	2-7	0-0	2	4
Evans	4-9	0-0	9	8
Waller	2-5	4-4	0	9
Arnett	6-11	1-2	7	16
Welch	6-9	0-0	5	12
Large	1-5	0-0	1	3
Branham	0-0	0-0	0	0
Bradshaw	1-2	0-0	2	2
Team				2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22-48</b>	<b>5-6</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>54</b>

FG Pct.: 45.8. FT Pct.: 83.3. 3-point FGs: 5-14 (Caines 0-2, Evans 0-1, Waller 1-1, Arnett 3-7, Welch 1-2). Large 1-2). PF: 12. Fouled out: Caines. Turnovers: 13.

ASHLAND	FG	FT	REB	TP
Hughes	2-4	0-0	4	5
Owens	2-8	5-6	3	9
Smith	9-15	3-5	4	25
Strader	0-1	0-0	2	0
Clarke	10-19	4-5	7	27
Conway	0-1	0-0	0	0
Team				2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23-48</b>	<b>12-16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>66</b>

FG Pct.: 47.9. FT Pct.: 75.0. 3-point FGs: 8-21 (Hughes 1-3, Owens 0-2, Smith 4-8, Clarke 3-7, Conway 0-1). PF: 12. Fouled out: None. Turnovers: 7.

RACELAND 12 14 11 17 — 54

ASHLAND 9 15 19 23 — 66

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