

## BOYS HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL, WESTLAKE 68, FAIRVIEW PARK 54

# Big second half propels Demons over Warriors, 68-54

By BRIAN LOVE

It's a secret that won't be kept long for the Westlake Demons.

In last Friday's 68-54 victory over Fairview Park, the Demons received a dominating performance from center Derek Occhipinti.

After sitting for most of the second quarter after picking up his second foul, the 6-foot-4 junior came back to score 17 of his 21 points in the second half, while controlling the backboards.

The result was turning a two-point halftime deficit into a Great Lakes Conference opening game victory for the 2-1 Demons. Fairview, meanwhile, dropped to 1-3, 0-1.

**“Everyone will ask who is he?” Westlake Coach Luke Harris said. “He was hurt last year so very few people know of him. I think real soon people will start learning his name. He’s a multi-tool player. He can do it all. He can handle the ball. He can disk the rock. He plays fantastic defense. We put him on their best player. We’re relying on him, allowing him to initiate the offense. I’m very proud of him.”**

However, Occhipinti said he was just doing his job.

“(Rebounding) is what I pride myself in,” he said. “My teammates were getting me the ball. I got open cutting to the backdoor.”

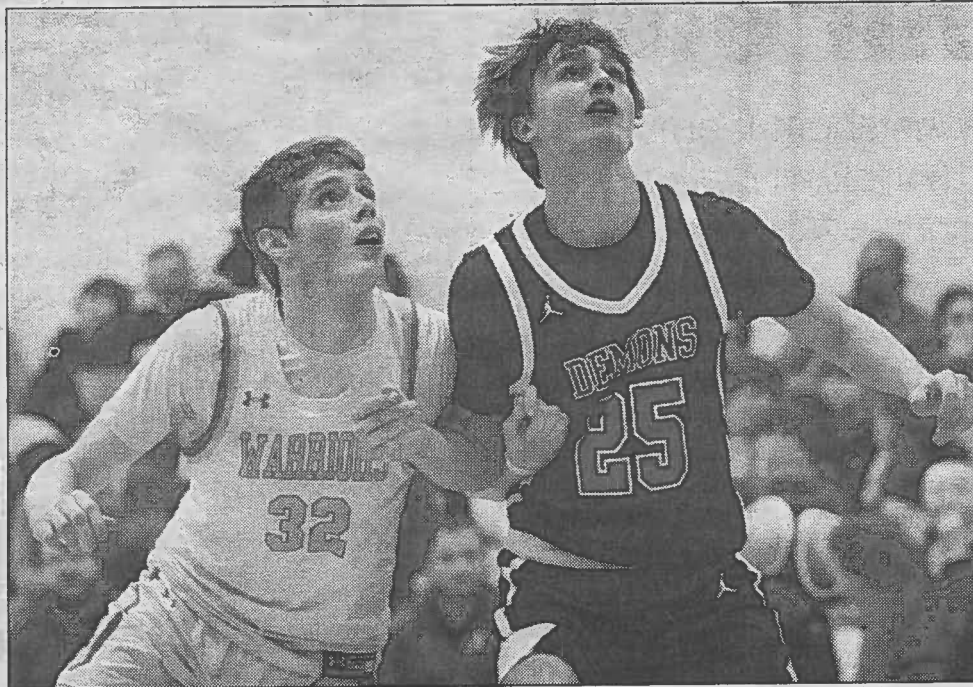


Photo by Sean Faska

Fairview's Jacob Rehor finished with 22 points, while Westlake's Sam Brucchieri had 9.

He took control of the game to start the second half. Down 27-25, the Demons used an 18-5 spurt in the first 5:42 to open up a 43-32 advantage.

Occhipinti started it with a basket off an inbound play, followed by grabbing a rebound and scoring on a putback.

After a 3-pointer by teammate Will Ostrowski and a Fairview 3-pointer by Jacob Rehor, the Demons scored 11 unanswered points.

The Warriors cut the lead to 47-39 going into the final quarter, but the Demons outscored the host team 21-15 to get the victory. In the final eight minutes, Occhipinti scored 7 of his team's points.

“Our top goal is to win the conference,”

Harris said. “(Fairview) is a great team. Kudos to them. That’s a tough team, especially in their place. But for us to respond, coming in as probably the underdogs, we took that to heart and I think it really motivated our guys to play hard, and we had a great game.”

Beside's Occhipinti's 21 points, Ostrowski had 16 points. Both Deontae Redding and Sam Brucchieri added 9, while Chris Brown scored 5, Anthony Fernandez had 3 and Jason Geagea had 3. Jackson Moore had 2.

For Fairview, Rehor had 22 points, followed by Colin Meany with 14, Wesley Fletcher Jr. with 10, Nolan Lucas with 4 and Collin Lucas with 2.

The Demons will play at Rocky River at

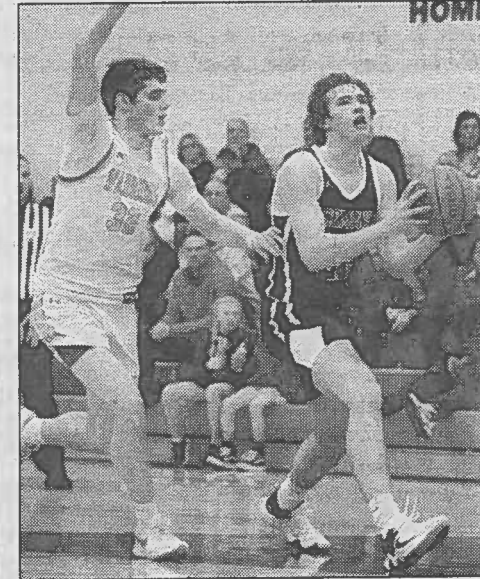


Photo by Sean Faska

Westlake's Derek Occhipinti was a threat rebounding and scoring in the win over Fairview.

7 p.m. Friday.

“We’ve got that one circled,” said Harris, who added, “We’ve got them all circled.”

Meanwhile, Fairview Coach Ryan Barry was far from happy with the effort from his team. The Warriors will face Lake Catholic on Tuesday before playing host to Bay on Friday.

“This was the first time in six years where I felt our kids got outworked,” Barry said. “That all falls on the coach and I’ve got to figure it out, how to motivate them.”

“It’s unacceptable. That’s not what we do here. We’re usually well prepared and very hard working. We can’t pick and choose when to give that effort. Maybe we’re playing the wrong guys, but we’ll figure it out.”

Contact sports at [sports@westlifeneews.com](mailto:sports@westlifeneews.com) or 440-871-5797.