

STRONG STORM drives through for a 112-87 win

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Most of the time, a shot taken inches from the basket is a lot easier to make than a 3-pointer.

Davidson County Community College attacked the hoop relentlessly Wednesday night and rolled to a 112-87 victory over Vance-Granville Community College at Brinkley Gym, avenging an earlier loss. Leading the way once again for the Storm was Justin Strickland, who ripped the nets for 40 points with much of it coming from inside the paint. "I think everybody on this team is a fairly smart player," Strickland said. "They understand that high percentage shots are good shots. For everybody on this team, a high percentage shot is a layup. We try to get as many as we can."

And they got more than enough in a game that got out of hand early. The Storm raised its record to 13-3.

Perhaps even more satisfying was the Storm's defense. The Vanguard's bombed them with 17 3-pointers in a scrimmage won by the Storm and 14 in a regular-season game that Vance Granville won at its gym. But on Wednesday, the Vanguard's didn't hit a 3-pointer until midway through the second half. "I am really proud of them for the defense they played in the first half," said DCCC coach Matt Ridge. "At the half, we came into the locker room and they hadn't hit a 3. We take a lot of pride in pressuring the ball and limiting shots."

There was plenty of good news on offense for a DCCC team that routinely surpasses 100 points. Landon Bowers, Strickland's backcourt mate, scored 20 points, while 6-6 center Justin Reissmann added 16, including a pair of alley-oop slam dunks. Nate Wilkins came off the bench to score 11 points. Jason Brown led Vance Granville with 25 points, while E.J. Henderson had 14, John Holley 11 and Jeremy Lenoir 10.

Strickland also had 10 rebounds and six assists. Reissmann grabbed eight rebounds and had a knack for dishing off the ball to teammates who were cutting to the basket when he drew double teams.

The Storm are well known for their prowess behind the arc, but in this game, the team did a lot more putting the ball on the court and driving.

"That's something we try to emphasize," Ridge said. "Over the course of 40 minutes, you want to attack and go to the line. If you do that, statistically you come out ahead. You don't want to settle for 3s. You want to take good 3s. We did a good job of attacking off the dribble."

The 6-2 Strickland, probably the most prolific 3-point shooter on the team, displayed more of a power game, frequently muscling in for layups, drawing fouls and often exulting after a successful play. "He's amazing," Ridge said. "He doesn't take a play off. He can score in so many ways. He's hard to guard." The Storm were hard to guard, period.

Wilkins converted a three-point play for a 3-2 lead and then things accelerated. Bowers capped an 11-0 run with a 3-pointer to make it 16-4 with 14:38 left in the first half. The Vanguard's never got closer than that again. The Vanguard's switched from man-to-man to a 2-3 zone and managed for a while to keep DCCC from making it a blowout. Henderson's backdoor layup made it 38-26 with 3:13 left in the half. Then it was time to unsheathe the long-range bombing as the 5-6 Bowers and Strickland hit consecutive 3-pointers to push the margin to 18. It was 54-33 at halftime.

DCCC's lead quickly grew to 26 points in the second half before a run by the Vanguard's got it down to 18 with 10 minutes left. But the Storm quickly reasserted themselves when Brandon Cowan scooped up a loose ball and drove coast-to-coast for a layup. "We've got a lot of players on this team who can step up," Strickland said. "Even our bench people are good. We go 13-deep." The Storm led by as many as 34 points in the second half. The biggest highlight was an inbound alley-oop pass in front of the basket to Reissmann, who leaped up and slammed it in with two hands.

DCCC travels to Atlanta to play Oxford College on Sunday.