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## **Dixie County Bears beat Crescent City Raiders 61-55; *Team goes toward state title***



**Every inch of the gym was filled with spectators.**

### **Story, Photos and Video**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Feb. 17, 2017 at 10:37 a.m. All Rights Reserved**

**CROSS CITY** -- The 61-55 win by the Dixie County High School Bears Varsity Boys Basketball Team over the Crescent City (Putnam County) High School Raiders showed two high-skilled teams going toe-to-toe from start-to-finish Thursday night (Feb. 16).

Bears Head Varsity Boys Basketball Coach William Graham was cool, calm and collected from before the game through the point after the end of this game too. He had the presence of mind to transport a table below a hoop and to let his team members clip string after string of the net through which the basketball scored the team the win of the night.

### **[Click Above Link to See Videos](#)**

**In this set of clips, viewers will see some shots being scored and the team entering to play.**

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**Bears Head Varsity Boys Basketball Coach William Graham pauses before the game in the locker room with the team to accommodate a request for a team picture. Seen here with the coach are Aaron Dawson (#1), Carlos Williams (#5), James Smith (#11), Dalym Valentine (#13), Juan Washington (#15), Chad Davidson (#20) Kyler McCaskill (#21), J'Shon Lovett (#23) and Derreck Charbonneau (#24).**

"Our guys just fought hard all night tonight," Coach Graham said immediately after the game Thursday night. "We'll just have to go fight hard on Tuesday (Feb. 21). We've got to play a scrappy Wildwood team. We've got to come home with a victory."

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## Cheerleaders



**The Dixie County Bears Varsity Cheerleaders pose moments before the start of the game. The JV Cheerleaders were assisting with cheer functions that night too. Seen here are Georgia Hodge, Kaitlyn Stephens, Brianna Yawn, Priscella Petty, Raegan Vonstien, Bailee Everett, Haylee Jones, Madison Farmer, Cayla Lord, Idalis Vasquez, Julianna Edmonds, and Taylor Downing (not pictured but active that night is Denisha McDowell). Bears Head Cheerleading Coach Crystal Bush is also a Dixie County School Board member. School Board Vice Chair Paul Gainey, Superintendent of Schools Mike Thomas and several other active and retired educators from Dixie County were present.**

This game on Thursday night was the quarter semi-final competition leading to the state championship title for Class 1A basketball.

Wildwood High School (Sumter County) won in a 77-71 semi-final regional victory over Bell High School (Gilchrist County) on Thursday evening too.

The Wildwood-Dixie County game on Tuesday (Feb. 21) is the Florida High School Athletic Association is the regional tournament final. That game starts in Wildwood at 7 p.m.

The coach said he has faith that if this team of Bears plays like they have played all season, and as they showed the crowd on Thursday night, then the win will go to this

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team from Cross City when they see the Wildwood Wildcats on Tuesday.

After winning against Wildwood, the coach sees the team going to Lakeland to earn the 2017 Florida High School Athletic Association Class 1A State Championship in Basketball.



**This photo captures the basketball in the split-second just before it passes through the hoop and net to score the first two points of the game. The scoring player was James Smith (#11) of the Dixie County Bears.**

James Smith (Bears #11) was the first player to score Thursday night. He put the most points on the board in the first quarter, too, however Jontavius Paige (Bears #2), Clifford Jackson (Bears #3) and Jamal Chapman Bears (#4) were among the Bears racking up points in the first quarter.

Other Bears on the home team in the Dolphus J. Peppers Gymnasium Thursday night were Aaron Dawson (#1), Carlos Williams (#5), Dalym Valentine (#13), Juan Washington (#15), Chad Davidson (#20) Kyler McCaskill (#21), J'Shon Lovett (#23) and Derreck Charboneua (#24).

In the first period, both teams played strong defense, but the Bears outscored the Raiders 2-to-1 with a score of 14-6, Bears.

In the second period, the Raiders really came through in the end with Thomas McKinnon (Raiders #4) scoring two out of two from the free-throw line with 5 seconds to go in the half. That put the Raiders in the lead 27-26.

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**James Smith (#11) and Aaron Dawson (#1) make their way from one end to the other on the court.**

Other players under the leadership of Raiders Head Coach Al Carter that night were Mike Brooks (#21), Jeremiah Gilyard (#1), Victor Johnson (#2), Austin Mayberry (#12), Henry Eckman (#32), Ben Randloph (#5), Reggie Robinson (#3), Zayne Whipple (#10) and Malcolm McHellen (#22).

The Raiders were 13-13 going into this game and the Bears were 17-8.

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**Bears Cheerleaders show some of their skill during the half-time intermission.**

In the third quarter, the Bears were just ahead of the visitors from Crescent City with a 43-40 score.

In the last two minutes of the game, it was Raiders 50 and Bears 55.

Bears added 6 and Raiders added 5 points in the last 120 second – and the score was 61-55 – Bears winning.

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