

Game-winning shots, memories will last forever

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What a fun week of high school basketball.

Within a week, there were plenty of buzzer-beaters. Most of the time, fans will see one or two per year. To have three within one week is rare.

There's nothing more rewarding for a player, coach and a parent to watch their son or daughter nail a game-winning shot.

It's something they will never forget. It's something they will talk about for many years, or they will eventually break the replay button on their computer or laptops reliving the moment.

It's thrilling – for everyone.

I have pictures on my wall at home of when my oldest son hit a game-winner not too long ago in basketball. I also have a photo of my youngest son being picked up by his teammates after knocking in the game-winning run last year in high school baseball.

There's just something about it that's special – I guess because it doesn't happen all the time and because the athlete showed strength under pressure. I wish every athlete could experience that feeling.

Webb Ballard has had that feeling.

His 3-pointer right in front of his Wheelersburg bench won the game as the Pirates defeated Waverly by three last week. The odd thing about that shot was that Ballard was cold the entire game. But he told me he wasn't worried.

“You just keep shooting,” he said. “Eventually the shots will fall.”

Wheelersburg coach Tom Barrick said those shots win games and added it's something that always seems to mean more after time goes by.

"I think it's special for a kid to experience that," Barrick said. "It's something that doesn't happen all the time and they get caught up in the excitement and that's fun for them. But after the season is over, they can reflect back, and that's when it really becomes special to them."

Pat Pierce has had that feeling.

His half-court 3-pointer at the buzzer lifted Green over New Boston last week.

There was some controversy as to whether he got the shot off in time or not. But as far as the official record goes – it counted, and the memories will last.

"I was just happy we didn't go into overtime," Pierce said. "It was pretty cool though."

It's fun and rewarding to see the expressions on the faces of those who nailed the winning shots as well as their teammates.

"That was preparation meets opportunity," Green coach Bobby Blanton said. "It was incredible."

Those memories are precious. And when those plays are caught on film or in pictures – that makes it more precious.

Brett Taylor has had that feeling.

Taylor connected on a 60-foot fade-away shot at the buzzer Saturday night to give Minford a big win over Oak Hill 44-43.

"It's got to be the best feeling I've had in my life so far," Taylor said. "It's been the best feeling in the world."

Minford coach Josh Shoemaker said what made that shot spectacular was that Taylor was being guarded and hit the shot fading away.

“It’s got to be the longest shot I’ve witnessed as a coach to win a game,” he said. “It’s a shot every kid dreams about making, and Brett did it.”

However, it doesn’t feel good to be on the other end.

When your team is in the hunt for the conference title and you are without your leading scorer – that’s the last thing you want to see happen.

Oak Hill coach Norm Persin has had that feeling.

“Nobody’s going to feel sorry for us,” Persin said. “We lost on a great, great shot.”

Persin said that he will have to regroup his squad and get back to work.

“We won the conference last year, so we have a target on our back and we have to accept that,” Persin added.

So in one week of basketball, a lifetime of memories were made for a few high school athletes.

What will happen this week?