



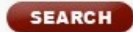
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Lady Panthers Split SWC Games

By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

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Saturday evening, the O'Fallon High girls' basketball team got back on the winning track with a convincing 49-34 victory over the Alton Redbirds.

Only one of the Panther hoopsters broke the double-digit mark in scoring with Taylor Klingelhoefler collecting 10, but the OTHS defense was consistent even though the offense sputtered.

For the Lady Panthers, the win was more important than ringing up big numbers on the scoreboard as their 15-point victory negated a 53-47 loss to East St. Louis late last week in another battle against a top team in the SWC in which the local cagers came close to an upset before faltering in the second half.

A 4-for-4 free throw effort by the Flyerettes in the final 30 seconds completed a comeback that left the Panthers on the short end of the score. O'Fallon got a combined 33-point effort from Kaitlin Kendall and Taylor Klingelhoefler, which helped them forge into a 24-18 halftime lead after slow first quarter start when the put up only nine points.

The Flyerettes may very well have been looking at an even bigger margin had it not been for the effort of 6'1" Joymesia Howard, who accounted for 15 of her team's 18 points over the first two quarters of action. The East St. Louis standout finished with 26 points. Klingelhoefler led O'Fallon with 19.

In a six-minute stretch near the end of the third quarter and into the fourth, the Lady Panthers shot themselves in the foot by committing eight turnovers, most of which were converted into points by the Flyerettes.

Despite the rash of miscues, the O'Fallon girls clung to a 34-32 advantage at the start of the final stanza, but Howard reasserted herself in the paint. Her teammates did enough damage — particularly at the charity stripe — to pass the Panthers and hold on down the stretch to improve to 12-2 overall and 6-1 in the SWC.

O'Fallon slipped closer to the .500 mark at 8-6 and 5-3 in league play as the prepared to face Alton on Saturday.

With their frustrations mounting, the Lady Panthers found a winning formula against Alton. Defense keyed the victory, as the O'Fallon girls held the Redbirds to single digits in both the first and second quarters and didn't allow any more the 12 points in any quarter of the game.

"At this point in the season, we need to focus on getting victories," said O'Fallon coach Ryan Massey. "It's been very frustrating for our girls. We've played well at times against good teams but haven't been able to close it out very often. I'm tired of just being close, and I know our team is too."

Alton gave the Panthers a chance to reverse that trend, and they were able to dot. Baskets by Taylor Underwood and Kendall Butler helped O'Fallon ease into an 11-7 lead at the end of the first period.

The second period was pivotal as the Panthers out-scored Alton 18-5.

The remaining two periods would be much more closely contested; however, the Lady Panthers were not going to revisit their East St. Louis experience. Alton shaved just a single point off of O'Fallon's 29-12 halftime advantage by the end of the third period.

In the fourth quarter, the Panthers played conservatively on the offensive end, working the ball for high percentage shots. Defensively, they continued to keep Alton off balance, changing the pressure from three quarters to half court.

Ten OTHS players finished in the scoring column.

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