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Lancers down OTHS girls in OT

By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

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Turnovers and missed opportunities trumped aggressive play for the OTHS girls' basketball squad as they saw a first half lead melt away and eventually dropped an overtime decision to the Belleville East Lancers.

The Saturday matinee, which was rescheduled after a Thursday evening snow out, started well for the Panthers, but an offensive surge led by Lancer guard Alexis Brown forced the game into an extra stanza and an eventual 69-61 O'Fallon loss.

An O'Fallon steal and lay-up by Taylor Klingelhoefler began the scoring in the first period, and the Panthers' 2-3 zone defense caused problems for the visitors from the outset. O'Fallon took advantage of the stalled Lancer offense.

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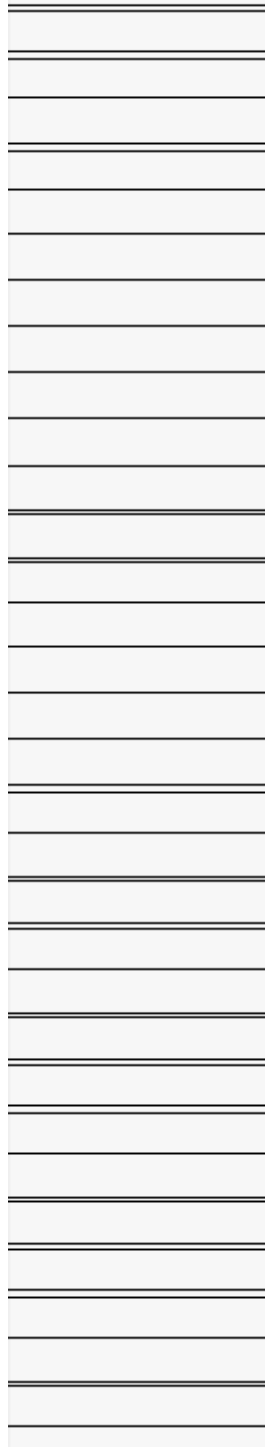
Katie Roustio scored on the block, and Kaitlin Kendall hit a lay-up on the end of an O'Fallon break to give the local girls an 8-2 lead at the 5:45 mark of the first period. The Panthers couldn't stand prosperity, however, throwing two bad passes in succession which Belleville East converted into five points on a short jumper and a long three-point basket.

With the early lead cut to just 8-7, O'Fallon went on another spurt, Taylor Underwood hit a shot in the post and Klingelhoefler stole an in-bounds pass and nailed a jumper on the wing to move the Panthers back to an 15-7 lead. Brown responded for East with back-

to-back baskets, reducing O'Fallon's advantage to 15-11 at the quarter break.

The two squads played the second half on nearly equal terms. O'Fallon kept a marginal lead thanks to baskets by Klingelhoefler, who finished the game as the Panthers' leading scorer with 18 points including a 12-for-15 effort at the free throw line, and Kaitlin Kendall, who popped in 16 points during the game.

In the second half, O'Fallon could not compensate for numerous passing errors, and Brown



took over offensively, scoring a career-high 28 points — 17 coming in the final two periods and the overtime.

The lead changed hands seven times during a wild final two quarters, but with time ticking off the fourth quarter clock, the OTHS girls found themselves trailing by three points. Kaitlin Kendall bailed the Panthers out with a pressure-paced three-pointer with 28 seconds remaining in regulation. Belleville East could not answer, sending the game into overtime.

Taylor Klingelhoer scored the first basket of the overtime period, but Stacy Hodge answered with a three-point basket to give Belleville East the lead for good. Hodge had missed four straight long range jumpers prior to the basket.

It proved a game-changer. The Panthers misfired on three consecutive inside shots and were 0-for-4 from the free throw line in the final three minutes. Belleville East, on the other hand, continued to add to their lead with critical baskets from Megan Holl and Brown.

“We just did not execute at key times during the fourth period and in overtime,” Massey said. “I can't fault our girls' effort and aggressiveness, but Belleville East came down and made big shots when they needed them.”

The loss drops O'Fallon's regular season record to 11-8 and 4-6 in SWC play.

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