


O'Fallon girls survive scare in Collinsville

Panthers record eighth straight win



By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

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In a departure from their most recent hardwood victories, the O'Fallon Township girls' basketball squad needed some last minute heroics last week to record their eighth consecutive victory and move to 3-0 in Southwestern Conference play.

The Panther girls survived a scare on Thursday evening in the Panther Dome when sophomore standout Taylor Klingelhoefler came through with a three-point play with 41 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter and the team collectively held their breaths as a last second shot attempt by Collinsville's Shay Barrett rolled around the rim and out to give O'Fallon a 40-39 victory. The win against the Kahoks was OTHS' first league win over the Kahoks during the four-year tenure of Panther coach Ryan Massey, and it couldn't have been sweeter.

"We hadn't defeated Collinsville since I took over the program, so that made us 0-8 going into the game," Massey said. "For 59 of the final 60 seconds, we were all wondering if the jinx was going to continue. In the huddle, we wanted to foul the dribbler because we still had two fouls to give. It didn't happen the way that we wanted it, but given the result, we were happy to walk off the court with a win."

The O'Fallon girls began the contest in the same manner as they had done in their seven previous victories, with balanced scoring and a good team defensive effort. Ally Fore, Stephanie Copelin and Katie Roustio hit early baskets to help the Panthers gain a 14-12 advantage after the first period — a lead they were able to extend during the second stanza.

With Fore continuing to make Collinsville respect the Panthers' perimeter game, O'Fallon outscored their visitors by three in the second frame to take a 28-23 lead at intermission. Fore's final shot of the half - a 3-pointer with one second remaining in the second period — boosted the Panther lead to five points. The Kahoks were unable to establish a consistent offensive attack due to the Panthers effective defensive work. The effort also saw Collinsville's top scorers Shantey Hibbler and Courtney Lindbeck accumulate a series of personal fouls which, ultimately, figured into the Kahoks' demise.

O'Fallon was able to maintain their lead through the third quarter although the Panthers' offensive output was not impressive. Turnovers reduced the number of scoring opportunities; however, the OTHS defense was much more consistent, holding their opponents to just seven points.

In a see-saw fourth period, Hibbler was able to pull Collinsville even at 37-37 on two converted free throw attempts with 1:08 remaining in the contest. The Kahoks appeared on the verge of overhauling the Panthers when Cassie Bluemmer stole the ball and scored on a breakaway layup to give the visitors an 39-37 lead with a little under two minutes still to play.

With their win streak now in serious jeopardy, Klingelhoefler came through in the clutch, hitting on a 3-point play with 41 seconds remaining. The Panther girls regained possession of the ball with the lead, but Collinsville fouled immediately, sending Klingelhoefler to the charity stripe with 14 seconds left. This time the OTHS sophomore missed the shot, giving the Kahoks one more shot at pulling the game out of the fire.

With six seconds remaining, the Kahoks called time out to set up a final play. The Panther defenders chased the ball as the seconds ticked off the clock, trying to execute their coach's directions by fouling to force Collinsville to enter the ball from out of bounds. The visitors successfully held on to the basketball, passing it to Barrett for the last second attempt in the lane.

"Last year, we played a lot of teams close until the final minute or so and they could not finish the game on a positive note," Massey said. "I think the thing that was the most gratifying about the win over Collinsville was that our girls were able to step up and overcome a potentially adverse situation and win the game. It was a nice win for the program."

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