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O'Fallon weathers a rocky start, rallies to stop streaking Belleville East

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By Scott Marion | STLhighschoolsports.com | Posted: Thursday, January 19, 2012 10:15 pm | Loading...



O'Fallon's Kaitlin Kendall (34) is guarded by Belleville East's Mariah Sunkett as she drives to the basket during Thursday's game. (John Swistak Jr. | Journal)

BELLEVILLE • When the O'Fallon girls basketball team found itself trailing by 12 points in the second quarter Thursday night at Belleville East, coach Ryan Massey had a simple message for the Panthers: Don't panic.

O'Fallon heeded Massey's advice, pulling within three points by halftime on the way to a 62-58 victory. The Panthers improved to 10-6 overall and 7-3 in the Southwestern Conference.

"I feel like the girls are starting to learn to play with some poise and confidence," Massey said. "(East) went on a big run, but we played through it and got back in it. This was a good team effort and a lot of people played well for us."

The loss snapped a seven-game winning streak for East, which slipped to 12-7 and 6-4.

"I felt our defense was better than the first time we played them (a 72-59 loss at O'Fallon on Dec. 16), but we can't get into a shooting contest with them," East coach Andrea Seipp said. "We've got to be able to get stops so that we can push the ball up the floor. We did that in the second quarter, and that's when we got on a run."

A jumper by Taylor Klingelhoefter gave O'Fallon a 15-9 lead with 1 minute 42 seconds remaining in the first quarter. But a 13-0 East run, capped by two free throws from Mariah Sunkett, put the Panthers ahead 33-21 with 2:37 to play in the second quarter.

O'Fallon, however, scored the last nine points of the half to cut East's lead to 33-30.

"(Katie) Roustio was great tonight," Massey said of the 6-foot-2 junior. "She altered a bunch of shots around the paint, and she was very aggressive."

The second half was a back-and-forth affair, with neither team leading more than five points until a free throw by Roustio put O'Fallon ahead 60-54 with 59 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter. East got within 60-58 on Sunkett's turnaround jumper with nine seconds on the clock, but the Panthers clinched the win on two free throws by Kaitlin Kendall with eight seconds left.

"In previous games, we've kind of lost it and not had our heads up, but tonight we kept our composure and did well under control," Kendall said. "We didn't get down on ourselves."

Kendall had a team-high 19 points for O'Fallon, including a pair of 3-pointers in the fourth quarter. Roustio (13 points), Taylor Underwood (11) and Taylor Klingelhoefter (10) also were in double figures for the Panthers.

"We're a really good team that works together," Kendall said. "I knew I had to work a lot on my game if I want to play in college, and I've put a lot of time into improving my shooting."

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Brown led East with 23 points. Sunkett finished with 20.

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