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## O'Fallon hangs on, tops West

BY NORM SANDERS - News-Democrat

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O'FALLON -- After a nightmarish start Tuesday that saw them fall behind 14-0 from the opening tip, the Belleville West Maroons eventually managed to throw a scare into the O'Fallon Panthers.

West trailed by as many as 16 points, but cut the deficit to four before eventually dropping a 66-56 decision in a game that allowed O'Fallon to grab sole possession of first place in the Southwestern Conference.

"It's hard to spot a team that's one of the best teams in the state 14 points to start the game," West coach Joe Muniz said of O'Fallon (12-2), a team ranked fourth in the latest Associated Press Class 4A state poll and first in the News-Democrat Large-School rankings. "They came out and shot the ball very well to start the game and our kids hung in there.



O'Fallon's Charles Joy shoots a three pointer as West's Michael Schmidt goes to block during the first

"They showed some life at the end and I really thought we had them on the ropes there in the fourth quarter. We just didn't make enough plays down the stretch to win the game, and they did."

West (7-4 overall, 4-1 in the conference) is ranked second in the area.

O'Fallon's Josh Buie scored 14 of his 16 points in the second half, including eight in the fourth quarter. It was a fairly quiet night on the score sheet for Butler recruit Roosevelt Jones before the fourth quarter, when he dropped in 10 of his 16 points.

Jones also was a wall at the defensive end and finished with 10 rebounds and six assists.

All of them were needed with the desperate Maroons making a late push. They cut O'Fallon's lead to four points late in the third quarter and twice more in the final 1:38.

"We never expected them to roll over," O'Fallon coach Rick Gibson said. "When we got up whatever we did at the start, we knew that they'd have fight in them.



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half of their game at O'Fallon on Tuesday. - Zia Nizami/BND

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### O'Fallon hangs on, tops West - High sc...

Belleville West is not going to roll over no matter what. We expected it to be a dogfight the entire game and it was."

Dylan Chatman led the Maroons with 13 points, while Michael Schmidt and Kane Sweeney scored 10 points each.

Jones picked up a foul and technical foul with 2:36 left in the third quarter. Arguing a noncall against Jones, Gibson also was called for a technical foul.

West sophomore Nick Van Osdale hit two free throws each time, but the Maroons couldn't get any more points out of the opportunities.

"We got close," Muniz said. "We got to four and five and we made the two technical free throws (twice). But those are opportunities where you're looking for a five-point possession that would have

changed the ballgame and we panicked a little bit."

West turnovers that led to dunks by Charles Joy and Jones allowed O'Fallon to run off a 9-0 lead.

The Panthers dropped in a 3-pointer by Roy Bullock and another shot to push the Maroons into a 14-0 hole.

West didn't score until Chatman's layup at the 3:35 mark of the first quarter. The Maroons recovered from the early onslaught to trim O'Fallon's lead to eight points early in the second quarter.

The Panthers drained five 3-pointers in the first half, hitting 9-of-13 shots in the first quarter and 15-of-24 in the first half overall.

"They shot the ball awfully, awfully well in that first quarter," Muniz said. "In the first half they shot awfully well. I didn't think they were going to make their shots all night long and if they did, they were going to beat us by 40. But they didn't."

O'Fallon was 8-of-12 at the free-throw line in the fourth quarter, with Jones sinking all four of his attempts to help hold off the Maroons. The Panthers also survived despite some errant 3-point shots while trying to maintain the lead,

"Our kids never got rattled when they did get it down there and then we stepped up and made some big free throws," Gibson said.

Girls basketball

O'Fallon 66, Belleville West 63

O'Fallon sophomore Katie Roustio scored 23 points and blocked a shot by Rejae Davis with the game on the line as the Panthers edged the Maroons in a Southwestern Conference game.

West cut O'Fallon's six-point lead to three with 14.1 seconds remaining on a 3-pointer by Samantha Voegtle. The Maroons also helped force a turnover on the O'Fallon inbounds play, regaining possession with 11.1 seconds to play.

Roustio's blocked shot helped O'Fallon hold on for the win.

Taylor Klingelhoefter added 17 points for O'Fallon, sinking four free throws in the final 63 seconds.

West senior guard Erika McCaster scored 20 points before fouling out with 2:12 to play.

Contact reporter Norm Sanders at [nsanders@bnd.com](mailto:nsanders@bnd.com) or 239-2454.

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