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# O'Fallon girls edge Belleville West

## Claim Consolation Title at Mascoutah

By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

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Claiming a Southwestern Conference victory over the Belleville West Maroons proved no easy task for the OTHS girls' basketball squad, but the Panthers parlayed a dominant performance in the post by sophomore Katie Roustio and clutch free throw shooting at crunch time from Taylor Klingelhofer to capture a 66-63 win.

The O'Fallon girls, fresh off their consolation title in the Mascoutah Holiday tournament, roared to an early lead primarily on the scoring of Roustio on the block complemented by Klingelhofer's jumpers from midrange.

Roustio started the scoring with a short jumper inside, the first of four straight buckets by the 6'1" sophomore. While Roustio was ripping the Maroons in the paint, Belleville West was as cold as the weather outside, misfiring on their first four shots against O'Fallon's 2-3 zone defense.

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O'Fallon junior Taylor Klingelhofer avoids a Maroon defender. - PROGRESS/Adam Harrel

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Erika McCaster finally got Belleville West on the scoreboard with a deep 3-pointer, but the Panthers answered with a short jumper along the baseline by Klingelhofer. Roustio continued to score at will in the post as the quarter wound down with Ashley Porter accounting for the final OTHS basket of the period, giving O'Fallon an 18-9 lead.

Belleville West warmed to the task a bit in the second stanza, but O'Fallon was able to maintain a double-digit advantage with several more OTHS players getting involved in the offense. Kendall Butler knocked in a jump shot, Taylor Underwood hit on a shot on the block and Ciara Jones scored on a pull up jumper in the lane during the middle stages of the period. The combined effort of Coach Ryan Massey's charges allowed them to take a 14-point lead into the locker room at halftime, 35-21.

Things began to unravel a bit for the Panthers during the third quarter, however. Belleville West began the period with additional pressure in the full court, and the adjustment paid immediate dividends. McCaster got things started for the visitors with a 3-point basket on the Maroons first possession.

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Initially, the Panther girls were able to answer with Kendall Butler hitting on a rebound basket and Roustio banking in a short jumper in the lane. The Belleville West pressure began to take its toll as the quarter progressed. Several O'Fallon turnovers were converted into points, culminating in a 3-point

bank shot off the wing which cut the O'Fallon lead to 45-42 at the start of the fourth quarter.

With the outcome now very much in doubt, the two squads battled through the final eight nerve-wracking minutes. Two Belleville West free throws at the 4:50 mark brought the Maroons back to within two points, 53-51, but Taylor Klingelhoefter kept O'Fallon on top with two free throws. Another bad pass by the Panthers gave West the ball with 3:30 remaining and on the ensuing possession, the Maroons converted both ends of a one and one free throw opportunity to knot the score at 56-56.

Again Klingelhoefter came to the rescue, nailing a pull up 3-pointer in transition to put the Panthers back on top. In the final two minutes, both squads had chances to take the lead. But Klingelhoefter gave O'Fallon a little breathing room, hitting on four consecutive free throws in the final 45 seconds.

Refusing to accept defeat, Belleville West narrowed the gap with another 3-point basket with 14.1 seconds left in the game. After a time out, O'Fallon threw the ball away on the in-bounds pass, giving West one last shot at sending the game into overtime. With only a few seconds to work the ball, the Maroons swung it around the perimeter and launched a shot from the right corner.

The drama ended at that point when Katie Roustio charged toward the Maroon shooter and rejected the game-tying attempt, allowing the Panther girls to walk off the court with a 66-63 victory.

Preceding the Southwestern Conference win over Belleville West, Coach Ryan Massey's squad ended their holiday tournament experience on a positive note, winning three of four games to capture the consolation championship for the second year in a row.

On the final day of the Mascoutah Invitational basketball tournament, the O'Fallon girls' squad was not exactly in the position they wanted to be, but they made the most of it, collecting back to back victories over Centralia and Carbondale and finish 3-1.

Playing in their second straight 8:30 a.m. curtain-raiser on Wednesday against the Centralia Orpahn Annies, the local girls showed little signs of fatigue although they did have to battle from behind to insure their spot in the consolation bracket title game later in the day. Kendall Butler and Taylor Klingelhoefter led the Panther attack with 16 and 15 points respectively. Trailing 30-22 at halftime, the Panther girls rallied with a strong defensive effort and a much more efficient offense to outscore the Annies 17-9 in the third period and put the game away with an 18-point fourth quarter.

Facing another South Seven conference foe, Carbondale, in the consolation finals, the local girls had to accomplish the task without the services of Katie Roustio who was sidelined with an injury. Taylor Klingelhoefter made up for her running mate's absence, pouring in 19 points to lead the Panthers.

O'Fallon squeezed out a 9-8 lead after the first quarter but were able to hold the Terriers scoreless in the second stanza to build a 19-8 halftime lead. Carbondale turned the tables on O'Fallon in the third period, scoring over twice as many points (22) as they had in the first two quarters. O'Fallon survived the onslaught, however, and won the game at the charity stripe, converting on 11 of 14 free throws to post a narrow 40-37 victory.

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