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O'Fallon girls take Taylorville title

Make amends for opening loss

By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

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An overtime loss to Hillsboro to start the 2010-11 season snapped the OTHS girls' basketball squad into shape over the Thanksgiving weekend as they reeled off four straight wins in the Taylorville Round Robin tournament to capture the tourney title for the second year in succession.

The poor shooting — particularly at the free throw line — and a lackluster effort against the Hilltoppers became just a bad dream for Coach Ryan Massey and his charges as they bounced back in game two of the tourney to defeat Lincoln 47-41, setting the stage for a Panther prowl through the remaining games of the tournament.

Facing Lincoln after the opening round overtime loss, the O'Fallon girls took a little time warming to the task, scoring just 14 first half points and trailing the Railsplitters 18-14 at the intermission.

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Offensively, the Panther girls finally discovered their offense in a second half that featured a 22-point explosion in the fourth period. Sophomore Katie Roustio helped ignite the O'Fallon rally with strong interior play. Roustio scored in double figures for the second game in succession, leading the OTHS squad with 14 points. Kaitlin Kendall and Taylor Klingelhoefler added nine points each to help O'Fallon even its record at 1-1.

The local girls moved above the .500 mark in their next court appearance, taking the measure of Petersburg-Porta 57-43. The Panthers continued to improve offensively,

scoring 29 first half points to build a 13-point cushion by halftime.

With Porta attempting to slow the offensive effectiveness of Roustio in the paint, Kaitlin Kendall made them pay, hitting for 21 points on 4-for-5 shooting from beyond the arc. Klingelhoefler chipped in with 11 points, and the O'Fallon squad was much more consistent at the charity stripe, connecting on 16 for 25, many coming in the second half to keep their opponents from digging too deeply into the OTHS lead.

The better numbers continued to mount as the O'Fallon girls cruised to victory number three — this time over Auburn — 48-34. O'Fallon used a more balanced attack to dispose of their opponents this time around with three players hitting double figures.

Klingelhoefler led OTHS with 14 points. Kendall (13) and Butler (10) were major contributors to victory number three.

The tourney finale pitted host Taylorville against the OTHS squad. Playing before a vocal and partisan Taylorville team, the O'Fallon girls turned in their best performance of the tournament, blasting the Tornados 60-34.

Klingelhoefler was a major force in securing the victory and the tourney title with a 23 point effort, including a perfect 13-for-13 performance at the free throw line. Katie Roustio's inside play balanced Klingelhoefler's perimeter game as she popped in 11 points.

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Klingelhoefers consistent play earned her All-Tourney honors — the only O'Fallon player to be selected.

The Panther girls built a 14-9 lead at the end of the first period but could not shake Taylorville in the second. The host team trailed 33-23 at halftime, but O'Fallon tightened their defensive effort in the second half, holding the Tornadoes to nine points in the third period and only two in the fourth.

"We really started slowly but began to show some signs of life as the tourney continued," Massey said. "We're still in the process of finding out what we can do and how to approach the game with the number of new faces in the lineup. I thought our girls made some positive steps in the right direction. We just need to continue to figure out our roles. When we do that, we should be a good basketball team."

On Thursday, the O'Fallon girls will open Southwestern Conference play with a home contest against the Granite City Warriors. Next Tuesday, they will travel to Alton.

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