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 Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2012 20 comments

O'Fallon hangs on for win over Granite City

BY DEAN CRIDDLE - News-Democrat

O'FALLON -- Seeking to put an end to a two-game losing streak, the O'Fallon Panthers were far from perfect on Tuesday against Southwestern Conference rival Granite City.

But on this night average was good enough.

Senior Kendall Butler and sophomore Taylor Underwood knocked down crucial shots in the fourth quarter to help halt a Warriors' comeback attempt as O'Fallon got back on the winning track with a 46-37 win.



Blasted by state power Edwardsville and nipped by nonconference foe Highland in its last two outings, O'Fallon saw an 11-point lead cut to 39-34 with 2 minutes, 25 seconds left following the third of three straight baskets by Warriors junior Natalie O'Keefe.

But Butler made a 3-point basket, then followed seconds later by getting behind the Warriors defense for a layup to get the Panthers (8-5, 5-2 in the SWC) out of danger.

"We didn't shoot the basketball very well from the perimeter tonight, but if we do, I

think you're looking at a different ballgame. That's fine though because sometimes you've got to grind these games out and that's exactly what we did tonight," O'Fallon coach Ryan Massey said.

"I thought we played 2 1/2 good quarters the other night against Highland but we just didn't finish. It's nice to get back on the winning track."

Granite City (7-9, 1-6) led briefly early and tied the game at 12 on a basket by O'Keefe early in the second quarter.

But O'Fallon scored the next nine points and took a 25-16 lead at halftime.

Granite City spent the rest of the game trying to chase down the Panthers. And despite a solid 15-point, 17-rebound effort from O'Keefe, the Warriors never caught up.

"We made a nice little run and spent a lot of energy trying to catch up there in the fourth quarter. But you've got to give O'Fallon credit. They attacked the basket and got layups and had the basketball in the right players' hands," Warriors coach Raffi Karibian said.

"Paige (Luehmann) got 21 on them last time and so they focused a lot of attention on her. But we had some other kids step up and shot the ball well. Then when Natalie (O'Keefe) got going there, it gave us a nice little inside-outside game. We just didn't do that for four quarters."

Tied at 12 early in the second quarter, O'Fallon junior Katie Roustio scored inside and Taylor Klingelhofer followed with a 3-point shot to give O'Fallon a 17-12 lead.

Underwood and Butler concluded the Panthers 9-0 surge with baskets to increase the advantage to 21-12.

A 3-point hoop by the Warriors Tatiana Wartenbe cut the lead to six, but Butler followed two possessions later with a 3-point basket of her own to put the Panthers up nine at halftime.

Roustio and Katlin Kendall combined for eight third quarter points as O'Fallon kept a

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Roustio and Butler had 12 points to pace O'Fallon.

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