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Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012 0 comments

Panther girls get well at expense of Granite City

Victory over Warriors halts 2-game skid

By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

A win is a win is a win.

The O'Fallon High girls' basketball team would attest to that fact after suffering through a rocky week that included losses to Edwardsville and Highland.

That pattern changed for the better on Tuesday evening, however, as Coach Ryan Massey's squad withstood a concerted second half comeback from the visiting Granite City Warriors to post a 46-37 victory.

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After suffering a humbling loss to Edwardsville and experiencing a second half collapse which resulted in a two-point loss to Highland, the Lady Panthers finally found the recipe for success Tuesday night to improve their record to 8-5 overall and 5-2 in Southwestern Conference play.

Kendall Butler and Becky Underwood were the catalysts in the Panther victory, both hitting crucial shots in the fourth quarter to avoid repeating the conclusion of their contest against the Highland Bulldogs.

The Panthers built an 11-point lead early in the fourth period, but Warrior junior Natalie O'Keefe rallied her team with a series of baskets to cut the OTHS advantage to just four, 39-34, with a little over two minutes remaining in the game. With visions of a Highland repeat creeping into focus, Butler nailed a 3-point bomb followed just seconds later by a slashing drive to the basket to put the Lady Panthers safely back on top.

The two squads battled to a 10-10 tie during the first quarter, but a couple of inside baskets by Katie Roustio and successful perimeter shots by Butler and Taylor Klingelhoef allowed the Panther girls to build a 25-16 halftime lead.

Granite City stayed doggedly close to O'Fallon through the third quarter before mounting their biggest challenge in the final frame. The Warriors scoring run saw the Panthers bend, but this time they didn't break despite some shaky shooting down the stretch. Butler and Roustio led the attack, each hitting for 12 points.

"We just weren't able to shoot the ball effectively from the perimeter," said OTHS coach Ryan Massey. "This game was a grinder for us. When the shots aren't falling, you have to find a way to survive. We didn't do that against Highland, but tonight our girls gutted it out down the stretch to preserve the victory."

The win helped the OTHS squad put some distance between themselves and the Edwardsville debacle. The high-flying Tigers scored early and often in the SWC matchup late last week, building a 20-6 lead after the first eight minutes.

Edwardsville continued to blast away in the second stanza, putting the game out of reach by intermission with a 43-20 advantage.

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