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Friday, Jan. 20, 2012 0 comments

Panthers close the deal, beat East

BY DEAN CRIDDLE - News-Democrat

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BELLEVILLE -- In a night full of momentum shifts, the O'Fallon Panthers had the final one Thursday at Belleville East High School.

Senior Katlin Kendall connected on a pair of crucial 3-pointers in the fourth quarter and the Panthers made just enough free throws down the stretch in a 62-58 win over Belleville East in a Southwestern Conference game.

Kendall, whose three short-range jumpers in the third quarter helped give O'Fallon the lead, broke a 50-all tie with a 3 with just under four minutes remaining to put O'Fallon (10-6, 7-3) ahead for good.



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[GALLERY: East vs. O'Fallon Girls](#)

O'Fallon then increased the lead to 60-54 with under a minute left, before a pair of Lancers baskets, the second a short jumper from Mariah Sunkett, made it 60-58 with 7.6 seconds left.

But Kendall iced the game with two free throws as O'Fallon took over sole possession of third place in the SWC behind Edwardsville and East St. Louis.

"I'm very pleased. My team showed a lot of poise there right before the half when East went on that big run of 16-2 and came back with a 9-0 run of our own to cut the lead to three points at halftime. That was huge," O'Fallon coach Ryan Massey said. "We were able to get good contributions out of several players and we played four quarters.

"Some of those quarters weren't great, but we finished and it feels good to finish."

Alexis Brown led East (12-7, 6-4) with 22 points, while Sunkett added 20. The Lancers inside-outside duo tallied 29 of the Lancers' 33 first-half points.

The Lancers combination also combined for 14 points during a 17-2 scoring run as East turned a 20-16 deficit into a 33-22 lead late in the second quarter.

But four points from sophomore Taylor Underwood and a three-point play by Kendall Butler right before the half helped give the momentum back to O'Fallon, as it trailed just 33-30.

"This game was full of momentum shifts. They would make a push and then we would make one. You knew it would be a tight game. They (O'Fallon) just had a little more in the end," East coach Andrea Seipp said. "I was very proud at how hard the girls played. We just kind of backed off a little bit there offensively in the third quarter.

"We need to keep pushing, because it creates chances for Alexis (Brown) to penetrate and create."

Kendall, who scored 15 of her 19 points in the second half, opened the third quarter with three straight jumpers, while Katie Roustio and Underwood also contributed baskets as

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O'Fallon took a 44-43 lead heading into the fourth quarter.

"It was a great team effort. Katlin (Kendall) hit those three runners to start the second half and that was huge for us and I thought Katie (Katie) Roustio did a good job of changing some shots inside and she was very aggressive on the offensive end of the court," Massey said. "Belleville East is just so athletic. We knew we would have our hands full and we did."

Roustio added 13 points while Underwood (11 points) and Taylor Klingelhoefner (10) also were in double figures for O'Fallon.

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