

## Strong finish lifts O'Fallon girls to victory over Collinsville

BY STEVE KORTE - News-Democrat

O'FALLON -- It's the kind of game that the O'Fallon Panthers might have lost last season, but not this season.

Taylor Klingelhoefter converted a three-point play with 41 seconds left as the Panthers edged the Collinsville Kahoks 40-39 Thursday in a Southwestern Conference girls basketball game.

"We didn't finish games last year, and it's nice to see with a large group of seniors on the floor and some young underclassmen stepping up that we were able to finish that game," O'Fallon coach Ryan Massey said. "That was a nice win for our program in general, and it's nice to still be undefeated in the conference."



O'Fallon's Kendall Butler goes for a basket as Collinsville's Shantey Hibbler goes to block during their game on Thursday. - Zia Nizami/BND

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we had two fouls to give."

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The Panthers improved to 8-1 overall, 3-0 in the SWC. They've won eight straight games since dropping their season opener to Mascoutah 46-45.

"We've never beat Collinsville since I've been coaching," Massey said. "This is my fourth year, so we're at least 0-8 against them."

Klingelhoefter missed the front end of a one-and-one opportunity with 14 seconds to go, and the Kahoks called a timeout with six seconds left to set up a final shot.

Collinsville coach Steve McFall had to draw up that final play without senior starters Shantey Hibbler or Courtney Lindbeck because they'd both fouled out.

"Lindbeck and Hibbler are such key elements for us, and to have both of them on the bench at the end of the game like that is not what I would have chosen to do," McFall said. "I'd rather they gave them the sixth foul and let them play."

The Kahoks got the ball to sophomore Shay Barrett, who had a shot from the middle of the lane rim out with one second left.

"We didn't get the shot we wanted at the end, but we got a 5-footer, and it didn't go down," McFall said. "We obviously ran the ball to Cassie (Bluemmer), and then were trying to take it right down the middle with the guard or the post. We ended up getting the post in the middle of the lane."

Massey said he wanted his team to foul before the ball got to Barrett in the lane.

"In the huddle we wanted to foul, and it's easier said than done," Massey said. "You can talk about it all you want, but to execute in the heat of a game ... It turned out the way we wanted to, but we didn't execute the way we wanted to. We wanted to foul the dribbler because

Senior guard Ally Fore led the Panthers with 13 points. Klingelhoef and Stephanie Copelin each added eight points.

Hibbler had 16 points and Bluemmer had 14 points for the Kahoks, who dropped to 3-5 overall, 0-3 in the SWC.

"We fought our way back into the game, we attacked, the kids played their rear ends off," McFall said. "I was proud of them tonight. They could have won. Our kids competed tonight."

A breakaway layup after a steal by Kayla Murphy capped an early surge that put the Kahoks ahead 8-2.

The Panthers quickly tied the game on back-to-back 3-pointers by Copelin.

A rebound basket by freshman Katie Roustio at the buzzer ending the first quarter gave the Panthers their first lead, 14-12.

Bluemmer converted a three-point play to put the Kahoks back in front at the start of the second quarter, but the Panthers answered with three straight 3-pointers to go ahead 23-15.

Fore had two of those 3s.

Bluemmer hit a 3 from well behind the arc and the Kahoks eventually cut their deficit to 25-23 before Fore hit a 3-pointer with a second left in the second quarter to put the Panthers ahead 28-23.

The Panthers were 6-for-10 on 3-pointers in the first half against the Kahoks' zone defense.

The Panthers led throughout the entire third quarter, but Collinsville tied the game at 37-37 on two free throws by Hibbler with 1:55 left in the fourth quarter.

Bluemmer stole the ball and scored on a breakaway layup to put the Kahoks ahead 39-37 with 1:08 to go, but the Panthers regained the lead on Klingelhoef's three-point play.

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