CRYSTAL FALLS—Who's going to stop Forest Park's girls?

Nobody so far. The Lady Trojans boosted their record to 4-0 last week with wins at Carney-Nadeau and Kingsford. They are 3-0 against Skyline Conference foes.

But the nonconference win over Class B Kingsford was the big prize. "First time in a few years," said Coach Jeff Syrjanen later.

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"This team keeps surprising me each week, because they are getting better each game. You can see the confidence growing in them now."

At Kingsford, the Trojans came out aggressively right away. "If we didn't," said Syrjanen, "we knew they were going to come out aggressive." FP played well and led 14-9 after the first quarter.

The Flivvers rallied in the second quarter and took a 25-24 halftime lead. "We were our own worst enemy," said Syrjanen. "I would say we missed five or six bunny shots in the first half. We weren't able to finish."

If the easy shots had gone in, the coach felt FP would have led by 8 to 10 at the break. That was a main theme of his halftime talk to the girls.

In control: The Lady Trojans took command in the third quarter led by by Samantha Nylund and Maria Stankewicz, who scored seven and five points, respectively. Back-to-back threes by Nylund and Stankewicz "got us clicking," said Syrjanen.

"All of a sudden we went from an 8-to-10-point lead to an 18-point lead, just like that." The big third quarter was something he enjoyed—past FP teams often struggled in the third quarter.

During the second quarter, FP switched to a press, and it really rattled Kingsford in the third quarter, leading to Lady Trojan steals and transition baskets.

Between Lexi Gussert and Nylund (17 and 9 rebounds, respectively), FP had a big 31-20 rebounding edge. Syrjanen said his young guards, freshman Stankewicz and sophomore Kelsi Hendrickson, handled Kingsford's pressure and speed well and showed they are adjusting to varsity ball.

Gussert just missed a triple double with 22 points, 17 rebounds and nine assists, to go with seven steals and four blocks. Nylund was also big for FP with 11 points and nine boards. Sierra Robarge, another soph, added 10, and Stankewicz had nine—Forest Park was one point away from having four girls in double figures.

Gina Graff came off the bench and defended Kingsford's Carlee Benzie well. "She knew her role and played it well."

Numbers: Team stats: FP, 13-24 FT, 4 3's, 9 fouls, 31 rebs; Kingsford, 10-14 FTs, 3 3's, 13 fouls, 20 rebs.

Trojan stats: Lexi Gussert, 22 pts, 17 rebs, 9 asts, 7 stls, 4 blks; Sam Nylund, 11 pts, 9 rebs; Sierra Robarge, 10 pts; Maria Stankewicz, 9 pts, 4 stls; Jessica Bawyn, 2 stls; Kelsi Hendrickson, 2 asts. Kingsford scoring: Carlee Benzie, 14; Andrea Roell, 14; Courtney Qualley, 10.

Trojans	14	10	20	13	--	57
Flivvers	9	16	7	13	--	45

At Carney on Dec. 4, the Wolves greeted FP with an aggressive, trapping defense that was too much for the Trojans' young guards to handle at first, and the Trojans trailed by five after the first quarter.

But some adjustments helped settle the team down in the second quarter, while Gussert and Nylund powered the offense, scoring 11 and 8 points, respectively. They led FP to a 25-point quarter and a 32-26 halftime lead.

In the second half, the Lady Trojans stayed in control, building their lead to 15 and then 20. The Wolves never threatened again, and the Trojans' substitutes got some time to show their stuff.

Forest Park turned over the ball 20 times in the game, but half were in the first quarter, before the team settled down.

Carney used a box-and-one defense on Gussert, but it didn't stop her from scoring 22 points and claiming 19 rebounds. "Early in the game, we were missing some easy shots," Syrjanen said. "But as the game went on, we started hitting them."

Nylund had a big night with 14 points and 10 rebounds, while Robarge scored 13 plus five boards.

Numbers: Team stats: FP, 23-69 FG (33%); 3 3's; 8-14 FT, 8 fouls. Carney, 16-63 FG (25%), 4 3's; 2-6 FT; 6 fouls.

Trojan stats: Gussert, 22 pts, 19 rebs, 6 asts, 5 stls, 4 blocks; Nylund, 14 pts, 10 rebs; Robarge, 13 pts, 5 rebs. Carney: Charlier, 15; Murray, 11.

Trojans	7	25	14	11	--	57
Wolves	12	14	4	8	--	38

Coming up: The Lady Trojans visit Mid Pen on Dec. 11 and return home for a Dec. 14 game with Watersmeet. Games at Florence (Dec. 18) and home against Rapid River (Dec. 20) wrap up 2012 for Forest Park.