Lady Trojans barely escape Jets

Written by Peter Nocerini Tuesday, January 22, 2013 3:37 PM -

CRYSTAL FALLS—With winter weather finally settling in and a lot more ice around, Forest Park's girls basketball team nearly took a nasty spill at North Central Jan. 18.

The Lady Trojans found themselves down by 11 points midway through the first quarter against the Jets. They rallied to win 46-44 and stay undefeated, but it was easily their closest game of the year—and their lowest point total. __PUBLIC__

(Their smallest winning margin had been six, and their low point total used to be 54.)

The bottom line, though, is that the Lady Trojans did win. They also stopped North Dickinson 66-40 on Jan. 15 and are now 12-0 overall, 8-0 in the Skyline Conference.

At Jets: "They're big and solid," said Coach Jeff Syrjanen. "They gave us everything we wanted, I know that."

North Central made the most of its home-court advantage and pressed Forest Park early in the game. "They were beating us in our man defense," Syrjanen said, "and got out to a nice lead on us."

FP cut the gap to nine by the end of the first quarter and went to a 2-3 zone in the second quarter, forcing the Jets to shoot from outside. The Trojans outscored NC 14-6 in that quarter—Lexi Gussert hit a three from just past halfcourt at the halftime horn to cut the gap to one, 25-24. "That was a big boost."

Pressing back: The Trojans pressed full-court in the third quarter and outscored the Jets 8-6 in that quarter. They later got a boost when a Jets player fouled Gussert and then drew a technical foul. Lexi shot four free throws—two for the foul and two for the "T"—and made three of them, boosting the lead to six.

Forest Park never could pull away, though, thanks both to the Jets' stubborn defense and their own 27 turnovers. "We didn't take care of the ball real well," the coach said. "That was our major problem."

After scoring 19 points in the first quarter, the Jets only scored 25 after that against the Lady Trojans' zone.

Gussert scored 33 of FP's 46 points, including six three-pointers—no teammate scored more than Kendra Campbell's four. Several other Trojans helped in other ways—Kelsi Hendrickson ran the offense, Adel Isaacson played well off the bench, and Sam Nylund played aggressive defense and got five rebounds.

Numbers: FP team: 16-53 (30%) FG, 8-20 (40%) 3's, 6-11 (55%) FT, 16 fouls, 23 rebounds. NC team: 17-56 (30%) FG, 2-22 (9%) 3's, 8-17 (47%) FT, 13 fouls, 22 rebounds.

FP stats: Lexi Gussert, 33 points, 6x3, 7 rebounds, 4 steals; Kendra Campbell, 4 pts, 3 rebs, 4 stls; Samantha Nylund, 5 rebs; Maria Stankewicz, 3 stls. NC scoring: Morgan Wells, 15 pts; Baylee Wells, 11 pts; Darcy Rochon, 8 pts; Dana Rochon, 7 pts.

Trojans 10 14 8 14 -- 46 Jets 19 6 6 13 -- 44

Vs. Nordics: The game with North Dickinson Jan. 15 can best be described as methodical. Methodical and effective. Not emotional.

"We did what we needed to do tonight," Syrjanen said, "but it's not one of our best performances." He noted some illness on the team and the stress of exam week. "We need some rest right now."

The Lady Trojans had no problems at all with the Nordics. Gussert hit a two and a three in the opening minute for a quick 5-0 lead.

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The gap grew to 10 late in the first quarter, reached 21 late in the half, went past 25 late in the third quarter and reached 30 and later 35 in the fourth quarter. The Nordics had occasional scoring bursts and finished with an 11-2 run.

Breakaway: Gussert exited the game with three minutes left after scoring 32 points. She scored 10 in the second quarter and 11 in the third. Isaacson and Campbell both scored seven, and Hendrickson had five. Elizabeth Charlevoix led ND with 15 points, and Chelsey Stroud scored nine.

Isaacson and Campbell have just returned from injury, making a deep Trojan team that much deeper. "We're playing 10 or 12 people every game. That way, it's been working pretty well." Numbers: FP team: 29-75 (39%) FG, 4-17 (24%), 3's, 4-9 (44%) FTs, 37 rebs. ND team: 18-48 (38%) FG, 1-7 (14%) 3's, 7-12 (58%) FT, 22 rebs.

FP stats: Lexi Gussert, 32 points, 9 rebs, 3 stls; Adel Isaacson, 7 pts, 4 rebs; Kendra Campbell, 7 pts, 5 rebs; Samantha Nylund, 4 rebs; Maria Stankewicz, 4 rebs. ND stats: Elizabeth Charlevoix, 15 pts; Chelsey Stroud, 9 pts, 3x3; Lexi Steele, 6 pts.

Nordics 7 8 10 15 -- 40 Trojans 15 17 19 15 -- 66

Coming up: Forest Park will visit Rapid River Jan. 24 in its only game. Next Monday, Jan. 28, the Lady Trojans are back home, taking on Carney-Nadeau. Their Jan. 21 game with Iron Mountain was postponed to Feb. 11.