

Lady Outlaws clip the Falcons' wings

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The girls basketball team notched a 52-47 road win at Elmira on Tuesday, January 27, and three days later fell 57-30 at home to the No. 1-ranked Sutherlin Bulldogs.

In Tuesday's action, the Outlaws played excellent defense in the first quarter, but had trouble keeping Elmira off the free-throw line. The Falcons made 11 of their 13 attempts at the line, and added a bucket to take a 13-9 lead to close out the quarter.

The Falcons didn't make a single bucket in the second quarter, but went 12-for-15 from the line. Sisters scored 14 points, including a three-pointer from Nina Horner, and at the half the Falcons still held the lead with a score of 25-23.

"We were playing strong, even when we could not find a rhythm to our game, as so many foul shots were being taken from the line," said Coach Julianne Horner. "We talked about how to adjust our play at the half, and the girls were able to make a few adjustments that allowed us to not get the fouls called and keep the pace our style."

Gwen Knoop energized the team in the third with six points and five rebounds, which helped the Outlaws take a 34-33 lead at the end of the third.

"Gwen came in and made the change for us," said Horner. "She ran the floor, played good defense, and made good shots. She showed great leadership and poise in a close game."

Haylie Hudson did a solid job in the fourth. She tacked on eight points for the Outlaws, rebounded and did a good job on the Falcons' big players underneath. Hudson, along with Cierra Mann, made Elmira's big player

work for every shot, and completely shut her down in the final quarter, which allowed the Outlaws to take a solid lead.

Two big threes kept the Falcons within striking distance, but the Outlaws never gave up the lead and finished strong.

"I was very proud of the full team's effort," said Horner. "We had three players score double digits, as well as have seven of our 10 players score. That is how we will continue to win games; with everyone playing and everyone able to score."

Boston Moore, Hudson, and Mann all scored 11 points in the game. Hudson also pulled down 11 rebounds and Mann tallied 10. Gwen Knoop scored eight points in the contest and Horner added six.

Three days later, the Outlaws welcomed Sutherlin, the newest member of the Sky-Em League, to Sisters High School.

"We knew this was a great team and probably the best in the state in 4A," said Horner. "We were looking forward to this match-up as a gauge of where we want to go as a program."

At 18-0 this season, and looking forward to their 46th consecutive win in a row, Sutherlin came out of the gates fast. The Bulldogs started the game with a hard-nosed defense, and crisp, fast-moving passes to the open player. They quickly went on an 11-0 run, and at the close of the period the Bulldogs held a 17-4 advantage. Twelve of Sutherlin's 17 points came from senior-wing Olivia Gulliford. The Outlaws had a hard time trying to find their footing in their first encounter with the Bulldogs.

"Their full-court press is extremely good, and even having watched their game

tape to prepare, I think their speed and aggressiveness caught us by surprise a little," said Horner.

The Outlaws had a much better performance in the last four minutes of the second quarter. Mann and Horner battled against the Bulldogs' physical play and the Outlaws put 11 points up on the scoreboard before the teams headed into the half.

"Cierra took advantage of her size and strength in the low block, got a lot of solid rebounds and put them back in the bucket for us," said Horner. "Nina got into the rebounding battles too, and her free-throw shooting was an important part of the rally we had."

The Outlaws felt good about their second-quarter effort.

Nina Horner stated, "We just felt like we needed to go out and match them physically in the second quarter and show them we weren't going to back down easily."

In the third, Sutherlin began to show why they are No. 1 in the state. The Bulldogs' senior point guard Miranda Mendenhall, who was limited by foul trouble in the first half, scored all 11 of her points including three three-point buckets, in the second frame. Gulliford continued her strong play as well, and added 10 more points to give her a game-high 28 points after three quarters.

"Senior leadership is so important to a team, and those



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Dallas Knoop sets to shoot under pressure vs. Sutherland.

two seniors really showed their skills against us in the third," said Horner. "That kind of strength and ability to put a team on your back really shows why they deserve their ranking."

The Outlaws struggled with their ball-handling and had a hard time getting the ball in the basket. A timely three-pointer from Cassandra Arruda and inspired play by junior Olivia Stewart showed the Outlaws weren't going to give up, despite the fact they were outscored 21-6 in the period.

"Liv (Stewart) really showed up in the third and fourth quarters, and epitomized our 'don't-quit' spirit we teach every day in practice," noted Horner.

That willingness to fight until the last second showed up in the fourth quarter. Stewart and Mann continued to battle down low, along with Dallas Knoop, where a strong

rebounding and defensive effort led to multiple put-back baskets and opportunity at the free-throw line. The result was a 9-6 advantage for the Outlaws, which led to a final score of 57-30.

"One of our goals for this game was pressure defense, and when Bethany (Bachmeier), Boston (Moore), Olivia (Stewart), Gwen (Knoop) and Cierra (Mann) got a 10-second backcourt violation against Sutherlin in the fourth, it showed us that this team had no quit in it. Even against the No. 1 team in 4A in the state, that kind of effort and grit is what gives me confidence in this team," Horner emphasized.

The Lady Outlaws will head into the second half of the season at No. 4, with a bye on Tuesday, February 3. Sisters will host Cottage Grove at home on Friday, February 6, with a game time of 5:45 p.m.



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