

Outlaws split games against top teams

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The Sisters Outlaws faced up to a tough week, with games against two of the top teams in the Sky-Em League. The Outlaws recorded a 45-32 win at home against Cottage Grove (CG) on Wednesday, February 8. Two days later, the Outlaws suffered a 31-28 overtime heart-breaker to the Bulldogs at Sutherlin.

Sisters, Cottage Grove and Sutherlin entered the week in a three-way tie for first place in league. In the first round of league play, Sisters lost to CG by one on a last-second shot and beat Sutherlin by one at home in Sisters. The squad knew that both games this second time around would be dogfights.

The Outlaws game at home against CG was moved from Tuesday to Wednesday due to inclement weather. The team played well, controlled the tempo of the game and executed very well. Sisters did let up a bit in the final quarter, but forged through to win by 13.

Sisters' defense stifled the Lions, one of the most offensive teams in the state. In Cottage Grove's previous game, they scored almost 90 points, and the Outlaws' great team effort held them to 32 points.

Coach Rand Runco said, "We can't say enough about how well we have defended this season. Our offense has been coming steadily, but, most important, our confidence and composure has improved. Each team we have played has tried a new tactic against us, and CG hurt us outside in the last one-point loss. Our defensive effort was awesome, and we really hurt them inside and out. It was a terrific effort and a real statement about our teamwork."

Ty Horner was a force

inside for the Outlaws, along with Tanner and Tyler Head, and Keegan Greaney, who all pounded the glass.

"Tanner was a beast on the glass, and the other four bigs did not let up," said Runco.

The Outlaws perimeter also played well, handled pressure and traps, and hit open shots.

Greaney and Horner each scored nine points, Ben Saba contributed seven, and Tyler and Tanner Head, and Jack Berg each scored six.

The Outlaws went 12-for-15 from the line.

Two days later, the Outlaws suffered a devastating overtime loss at Sutherlin.

"We knew this would be a battle at Sutherlin, and we played well. It was a good game, but the bottom line was they did not allow us many looks and we missed many of the looks inside," said Runco. "We got the ball inside pretty well, but the Sutherlin match-up zone didn't give a lot of clean looks."

The game was close the first two quarters, and at the half Sisters held a 14-11 advantage. The Outlaws outscored the Bulldogs by three in the third and took a 24-18 lead.

Sisters only got a few touches in the final period and weren't able to get a point on the scoreboard. The Bulldogs' slow and patient offense held the ball most of the quarter, and Sisters missed the few good looks they had. The Bulldogs put up six points in the fourth and tied it up 24-24 with one minute left in the game.

Sisters held the ball for the last shot. That proved to be difficult because Sutherlin had only been called for two fouls in the half, and they used their fouls to stop the clock in the last 30 seconds.

Sisters struggled to set up a play, but finally got the ball



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Tanner Head scores against Cottage Grove.

to the baseline with a second left. The Outlaws had an open fast look, but didn't get the shot off, and the game went into overtime.

Sutherlin continued to hold the ball and slowly ran down the clock. The Bulldogs hit a deep three, but Sisters answered back with a quick bucket. The Outlaws pressured and fouled, and the Bulldogs converted both shots.

With 1.4 seconds left on the clock, Tanner Head took the ball out and fired a beautiful pass to Horner, who made a move. Ty had a deep open look from about 30 feet for the tie that was on point but fell a little short.

Runco told *The Nugget* that the Outlaws repeatedly got the ball in the paint, but did not get to the line one time. The Outlaws average about 15 points from the stripe every game, but this time they had zero points from the stripe and zero from the perimeter, which was the

difference in the game.

"It was a tough loss on the road and put all three top teams back to a tie," said Runco. "We have to regroup and come home for Junction City (JC) on Tuesday, and then on the road to Elmira. Both will be tough games, and then it's on to the playoffs."

"Our goal is to keep improving each practice and game. We are so proud of how well the boys are playing together and keep battling to get through league in the best position possible."

The Outlaws were to play at home against JC on Tuesday, February 14. On Friday, Sisters will wrap up league play on the road against Elmira.

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