

MHS from 1B

they had to withstand those punches and stay with it. If they do that, they're going to be in the game."

And for the first half of the game, they rolled with the punches, starting half-time down just three baskets. It wasn't until the game wore on, and exhaustion began to set in for the short bench, that the deficit grew.

"I was really impressed with our defense the first half," said Wolgamott. "They did a lot of good hustling. We basically had three first-year players on the court starting out."

There was freshman Kody Wierichs, who played hard on defense.

"He's not the biggest kid out there, but he was putting his nose in there, going for loose balls and hustling. He didn't score but his defense really helped us out."

Phillip Burnett, a junior, is also suiting up on the hardwood for the first time. While he didn't run up the score, "he was hustling his butt off all game," Wolgamott said. "He created a lot of second-chance opportunities for us. Even when he didn't get the rebound, his hand was in there, causing the ball to be deflected. He was a hustle player and a tough kid as well."

Junior Jesse Hughes made his varsity debut this week, "and he gave us some good minutes out there, focused and ready to go."

The top scorer of the night was Justyce Wierichs, who secured 17 points for the Sailors.

"He was definitely a difference maker and led the charge for us," Wolgamott said. "He's been around the game, but I don't think he's actually played in a high school game."

Senior Nate Neece was right behind Wierichs, scoring 12 points for the night.

"He was a monster all night long," Wolgamott said.



JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Mapleton's Jahala Blake brings the ball down on a fastbreak against Lowell Wednesday night.

"He's a senior and has been in the system for four years. He's going to be a leader in our offense and defense. If he crushes it like that every game, he's going to be a heck of a player."

Missing the game was JJ Neece, who will be returning soon after a solid season last year.

"He's developing a chemistry with Justyce, where it's a little nod and they know what to do," Wolgamott said. "If we can get that in the game, I think that can give us some easy backdoor lay-ins and some fun basketball with that."

Finally, sophomore Joseph Shephard will be joining the team, having only signed up just a few days earlier. In fact, Shephard is so new that he doesn't have a number assigned yet. But after a few practices he should be seen on the court in the coming weeks.

Last year, the Sailors began the season with 19-64 loss against Days Creek, unable to pull off a win until the fourth game of the season, against the Mohawk (43-36). Their next game was a 15-point loss to Lowell, a near mirror image to Wednesday's game. Still, the Sailors made it all the way to the playoffs last year, so get-

ting a 16-point loss in the first game is "encouraging for the future," Wolgamott said.

"The league is wide open — and with the players we got, as long as we stay healthy and ready to play, I think we could make some noise this year. I'm excited to see it."

As for the girls' game, which saw a 19-59 loss against Lowell, head coach Melissa Duffy and assistant coach Dan Gray stressed a newfound confidence in the team, which won only two games the year prior.

"I saw a lot of confidence and motivation," Duffy said. "Last year at the beginning of the season, the girls were shy. I gave them a goal of attempting at least three shots. That's how timid they were. One of the girls came to me and said, 'I've done the math and that's not going to win us games.' I said, 'I know, but at least you'll be shooting.' That was half-way through the season where they started attempting a few more shots. This year, they're already shooting more and taking more chances — which is a big improvement already."

Gray agreed. "I'm excited by how much the girls want to get better. This is a learning process, and it's going to

take a little bit of time for things to fully come together. But it's our job to keep the girls positive and moving forward," he said. "If they do that, we'll be happy with where we finish."

The coaches' enthusiasm came from how the team lost on Thursday. During the first half, Lowell was on its way to a blowout against the Sailors, creating an enormously comfortable lead of almost 30 points by half-time.

"But the third quarter was played evenly," Gray said. "If we just went by the second half score, it was 12-17. It was a very evenly played second half. We had some definite jitters in the first quarter, and it led to a blowout early."

The Sailors learned to control the clock and began hitting their shots.

"They were able to run an offense, which we weren't able to do until the end of last season," Duffy said. "To be able to see it happen a few times in the first game is promising for the season. ... They're better conditioned, they are playing more as a team, rather than for themselves. I think that's going to help in the long run."

And they have experience, with five returning players this year including Jahala Blake, Opal Burruss, Brier Shird, Emily Stevens and Daleena Bender. Newcomer Heather Wierichs was the top scorer on Wednesday, bringing in 7 points and "at least one steal," Duffy said of Wierichs, who also had four offensive rebounds in the game.

As far as needed improvements, Duffy said the team needs to get comfortable using the entire court, as well as improving its communication.

"And just overall court awareness," she added. "That's hard when you're trying to remember the new things that have been crammed into your brain in the last couple of weeks."

And these are things that the team can work on, especially with the confidence its players now possess.

"For me, it kind of sucks to take a loss first thing out," Duffy admitted. "It's hard on your confidence, but we have to look at all the improvements that have been made since the end of last season, and all the hard work they've done. From what I saw, I feel like we're

going to have a better showing than last year, especially when we get into league play."

The Sailors were back on the court last night (after press deadlines) and will be on the road this Tuesday (Dec. 10) at Elkton. Girls tip off first at 6 p.m., followed by the boys game at 7:30 p.m.

Little from 1B

days. Most schoolyard games are just for fun but I say most meet the criteria of a sport: exertion, rules and a result.

While my early games were mostly individual in nature, my first team game was probably kickball during recess. I joined the Hermiston swim team at the age of seven, played inter-city flag football, basketball and softball as I got older. These were certainly considered sports while things like the "Ford Punt, Pass and Kick" and Elks Free Throw competition were contests measuring individual skills.

There are still people ar-

guing as to which activities at Siuslaw High School are sports. The exertion level of the activity is the most argued issue. Individuals and coaches see much greater exertion in volleyball, football, cross country, basketball, wrestling, baseball, softball and track than they due in bowling and golf, for instance. There exists in these two latter sports skills needed, rules and results — the point being the bowler and golfer use exertion for a short period of time.

But are they sports?

As people age, the amount of exertion they can muster decreases. Sports for them change over time.

Playing competitive bridge might be an activity

chosen by this writer.

But is it a sport? It certainly requires skill, there are definitely rules and we get results sometimes against people around the country playing the same hands. Maybe I will try darts or shuffleboard.

I just read an article about colleges offering scholarships for E-sports as technology enters the sports-definition controversy. They will be playing video games against a computer; using their thumbs. If this becomes accepted as a sport, thousands of young people may just forgo outdoor activities — with Carpal Tunnel syndrome becoming the next most-often reported sports injury.

I will be unwilling to call that a sport. What do you say?



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