

New Year brings in league-play

By Zach Silva
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After a December packed with non-league basketball games, the calendar turns to 2018 and brings with it the start of league-play. The teams at the 1A level will begin their league journeys on Friday.

"It doesn't matter if we lose every preseason game as long as we win when league starts, that's what matters," said first year North Douglas boys' basketball coach Tyler Vancil earlier this season. "That's what we're trying to get better for to be at the top of our game when league starts because those are the games that matter."

In the Skyline League, Vancil's Warriors (7-4) will be trying to get back to the playoffs this season after finishing fourth in state last season. The team to beat in league this season is Pacific who are currently ranked second in the state.

On the girls side, North Douglas (10-1), Elkton (8-2) and Days Creek (7-2) will be three teams looking to take the league title. All three teams are currently ranked in the top 12 of the 1A rankings.

Elks earn hard-fought victory

Elkton's boys' basketball team finds a way to get third win in a row

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It wasn't always pretty, but for the Elkton boys basketball team, their sloppy play was good enough for a 49-38 victory over winless Crow on Thursday at the McKenzie 1A Hoops Classic. After dropping their first six games of the season, the Elks have now won three in a row.

"We kind of slugged our way through it but that's what we're going to have to do," said Elkton head coach Gary Trout.

Facing a Crow team that had six players suited up, the Elks struggled early to find the bottom of the net. As the team went down early, Trout yelled to his team to focus on their defense because that, he explained, is how they were going to get back into the game.

Elkton then closed the first half on a hard-earned 9-0 run that stemmed from turnovers and shots at the rim.

"That's our defense and that's how we're going to have to score. You saw us, early on we missed a bunch of shots and you know, that's typical for when you had a break like that," said Trout referencing the team's time off for Christmas. "We had to get some easy looks in our first break looks and that's why we can put spurts on."

In the second half the Elks leaned on leading scorer Brad Doudna who finished the game with 19 points. Austin Luzier added 12 points for the team.

The lead ballooned to 10 points in the fourth quarter but a Cougar 8-2 run in the closing minutes of the fourth cut the lead to four points. After a made free throw and Luzier made a three pointer, the Elks earned a victory.

"I don't know how many offensive rebounds they had but they had a bunch in the second half. And you know, that's just fundamental execution that we're struggling with right now," said Trout.

Warriors overcome slow start, poor shooting



North Douglas' (from left) Abby Whipple, Rylie-Jo Olds, Natalie Draeger and Payton Black watch teammate Nicki Derrick shoot a technical free throw.

PHOTO BY BECKY GERRARD

North Douglas' girls' basketball team defeats Lowell

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It was a first half to forget for the North Douglas girls' basketball team. Heading to the locker room tied at 16 to a Lowell (5-6) team that they beat by 25 earlier this year, the Warriors (10-1) regrouped and were able to claim a 40-27 home victory Thursday night.

"Thank goodness we got to halftime so we could actually get some things on the board and talk us off the ledge and calm us down and look at some things," said North Douglas head coach Jeff Davis.

After starting the game up 7-0 and looking as if it was going to be yet another rout for the Warriors, it was the Devils that responded. Behind a press break that that continually confounded the Warriors, the Devils put together a 9-2 run to tie the game. Tied at the break, North Douglas was looking for answers.

"We made some adjustments... and we had a great third quarter," said Davis.

"And then, the honest truth is, our defense got better and so they didn't score and so we saw no press."

In the third quarter, it was North Douglas imposing their will. Playing with an intensity that was not there

in the first half, the Warriors created steals and fast break opportunities as they outscored Lowell 16-2.

It was a team effort for North Douglas as seven players scored throughout the game. The team was led by Nicki Derrick with 11 points and Rylie-Jo Olds with nine. Abby Whipple had eight steals and seven rebounds.

"I think... it says we know how to win. And losing, and I don't want to sound smug, but it's kind of foreign to us," said Davis about his team that has not lost over five games in a season since dropping to 1A in the 2013-14 season.

"We fight that tooth and nail and so there's determination there. I thought we brought more energy. I think a lot of times you have to respond when things aren't going your way, you tend to be a little slow, sluggish. And I think we ratcheted up some energy."

North Douglas' lead got up to as many as 16 in the fourth quarter before Lowell cut their deficit to nine. Only three Lowell players scored led by Daisy Schnee's 10 points. Schnee also picked up a technical foul and had 23 of the team's 41 turnovers.

While the Warriors were able to grind out a win, shooting continued to be an issue.

"Our shooting, my God," said Davis.

North Douglas (15-of-45) had 25 more attempts from the field than the Devils (10-of-20) throughout the game.



PHOTO BY BECKY GERRARD

North Douglas' Sofia Alcantar drives past a Lowell defender.

Elks go cold in game, stay hot on the season



Top: Elkton's Samantha McCall sets up the offense for the Elks.

Bottom: Elkton's Hannah Maxwell limps on her hurt ankle in the second half.

Elkton's girls' basketball team hangs on to defeat Crow

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Surviving an injury and some post-holiday rust, the Elkton girls' basketball team survived a scoreless fourth quarter and beat Crow 38-30 in the first round of the McKenzie 1A Hoops Classic last Thursday morning.

"This is why we schedule this thing because the first [game] after break is always like this, I don't know why," said Elkton head coach Rob Parker.

After a low scoring 8-6 first quarter that put the Elks (8-2) ahead of the Cougars (7-2), Elkton's senior leader Hannah Maxwell looked to take over early in the second quarter. Maxwell got a lay-up to go but landed on a Crow player's foot, twisted her ankle and immediately fell to the ground.

"It'll heal, it'll be fine," Maxwell said after the game.

With their leading scorer out, the rest of the team was able to pick up the pieces. The Elks depended on a balanced attack from Alexis Halstead, Aspy Luzier and Allison Swearingen who respectively scored 12, 10 and eight points.

Elkton's offense continued to flourish and the team built a 17-point lead late in the third quarter.

After shouting instructions to her team from the bench and acting as their biggest fan, the injured Maxwell hobbled her way back into the game at the end of the third quarter.

"I'm really anxious sitting on the bench and seeing, like I want to help my team as much as I can. I was like, Parker

just put me in, I can give the girls a break, just a little bit of a rest. I'll do my best," she said. "And honestly, the best thing, at least I've found over the years, the best thing for a sprained ankle is to get back on it."

Struggling to get up and down the court, Maxwell was taken back out of the game three minutes into the fourth quarter.

"She wanted to come back out because she couldn't jump. It was hurting," said Parker.

As Maxwell was hurting, fatigue was setting in with the rest of the team. Parker noted that before the team took five days off for Christmas break, he ran them through a conditioning drill. The team did the conditioning drill again on their first day back and were back at the same level they were at, at the start of the year.

"In five days we lost that much. I mean, we were struggling," said Parker.

As Crow struggled to shoot, the Cougars were getting seemingly every offensive rebound and Elkton's once large lead was down to 10 in the final minutes of the fourth quarter. Elkton looked to run out the clock but Crow was able to keep attacking and after Whitney Anderson added in a lay-up, it was an eight point game with 36 seconds to play.

Anderson led all scorers with 20 points.

In the final 30 seconds, the Cougars claimed two more offensive rebounds but could not get a shot to go and the Elks, who did not score in the fourth quarter, walked away with a win.

"Just standing around. Again, probably tired. I think not having Hannah in there [hurt us]. The only one that was really going after them was Alexis. So just a lot of standing," said Parker.

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the members of Cottage Grove boys' basketball team. The team travelled to Alaska this week where they were victorious on the court and got to explore all that Kodiak, Alaska has to offer.



PHOTO C/O NICK FINLEY