

Overtime *from B1*

If we can do that, we'll be there. We'll be a good team. But, those are all what-ifs, so hopefully we're just learning from these experiences every single game."

It was, indeed, a tale of two halves for the Lions. The game remained close in the first quarter, but as Siuslaw began to gobble up turnovers and hit jumpshots, the Lions failed to keep pace and lost sight of their own gameplan. Cottage Grove found themselves in a 31-22 hole at halftime, losing the rebounding battle and scrambling on defense to stop a tall, quick-shooting Vikings squad while being unable to match Siuslaw's three-point shooting prowess.

"We gave up 12 offensive rebounds in the first half," Hutchison said. "Something I talked to them about is that we're not good enough to overcome giving up second-chance points or second-chance opportunities to these teams ... I made that a point of emphasis in the second half, along with taking care of the basketball."

The Lions, who had 11 first-half turnovers, shored up both their rebounding and ball security in the second half, turning what might have been a Siuslaw runaway win into a back-and-forth battle.

Sophomores Jayden Cameron and Carter Bascue led the third-quarter offensive run for Cottage Grove, outscoring the Vikings 14-7 in the period to cut the deficit to two, 38-36, heading into the fourth.

"I thought this was by far Carter's best all-around game that we've seen from

him," Hutchison said. "The way he was attacking passes with two hands and jumping high for them, attacking the rim, rebounding offensively and defensively for us. I thought he took a big step as a sophomore tonight. I was really proud of him for doing that."

With around four minutes remaining in regulation, the game was tied at 44. Dramatic three-point shots, whistles from the referee that incensed the home crowd, tense free-throw situations and missed opportunities: all in all, the whirlwind final 240 seconds had two ties and three lead changes. The Lions missed four free throws in the final seconds of the game that could have sealed the win, instead finishing knotted at 49 and headed to overtime.

"That second half I thought they did exactly what I asked them to," Hutchison said. "We recognized our advantage, which was inside, and they did a great job executing what we asked and what we looked at in practice this week."

Cottage Grove held a 54-52 lead late in



PHOTO BY NICK SNYDER/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Sophomore Carter Bascue took a big step forward for the Lions last Friday, scoring 12 points with 7 rebounds in the overtime loss.

the overtime period after a Ty Kishens three-point and a putback by senior Zach Anlauf off of an offensive rebound. Unfortunately for the Lions, the rest of the game went Siuslaw's way.

Bascue was called for a foul on the Vikings' Brody Terry, sending him to the line for two shots with under a minute to play. Siuslaw sank both free throws, tying the game, forced the Lions into a missed shot on their next possession, and then hit a game-winner their next time down the floor with mere seconds remaining.

It was a nail-biting finish in a meaningful, league-opening game. Cottage Grove surely would've liked to leave their fourth home game of the season with a victory, but Hutchison nonetheless felt encouraged heading into the rest of their 2020 Sky-Em matchups.

"I challenged them at halftime. I really wanted them to focus on those two things and they responded well. You can see in the

second half, we won the half"

Senior Daetryl Berry filled in for an injured Landon Colburn (out with concussion) at point guard, bringing a steady veteran presence to the team's performance, and Hutchison made it a point to highlight Berry's performance after the game.

"I wanted [Daetryl] to play lockdown defense and make that his priority and not worry about the offensive side ... and I thought he did a good job for us," Hutchison said.

Statistically, the Lions were led by standout performances from senior Zach Anlauf (17 points and 16 rebounds) and sophomores Jayden Cameron (17 points and six assists) and Carter Bascue (12 points and seven rebounds) who showed off his ability to finish ambidextrously around the rim while flying around the paint all game, securing rebounds and getting loose balls and deflections.

"At the beginning of the season, [Carter] was afraid to go left, or just not confident," Hutchison said excitedly of his young post player. "You can start to see that confidence building and that's just gonna make him so much tougher, if he can go right and left."

For a young roster, Lions' fans can expect the team to improve throughout the season, as they did last Friday against Siuslaw. But, as the league season gets into gear, only time will tell if they can play for four quarters the way they did in the second half of the league opener. The Lions travel to Elmira (4-10, 0-1) on Fri., Jan. 24 where they will look to earn their first Sky-Em win of the year.

Lions *from B1*

half which gets you out of rhythm."

The substitutions came because, despite a gargantuan second half lead, the effort from some of Eastburn's starters began to wane. He saw an opportunity to give some of his bench contributors more run, a move that should help the team's depth in the long run as they head into the main stretch of the Sky-Em season.

"The plan wasn't to take our foot off the gas," Eastburn said. "I don't care who's on the floor, we're supposed to keep our foot on the gas. [The substitutions] were given an opportunity and now they have that experience, so moving forward they know what's expected of them out there."

It was only possible for Cottage Grove to tie up in the second half due to their dominant first-half performance.

The Lions once again won the game with contributions from up and down the roster. Junior Matty Ladd and sophomore Gracie Arnold continued to terrorize opponents in the post, combining for 29 points, 11 rebounds and nine steals. Senior Megan Schatz returned from a minor knee injury to score 10 points along with two blocked shots and junior point guard Mikaela Blomquist played floor general and distributor, scoring just four points, but adding in three steals and

eight assists. Senior Mia Collins led the Vikings with 16 points, over half of her team's total.

"I'm pleased with where we're at right now," Eastburn said. "We're looking forward to the rest of the season, obviously. We probably have the most talent in the league, so it's upon us to go out and do what we're supposed to do. Nothing against the rest of the league."

The team-wide talent was clearly evident in this one as Cottage Grove shot 49% to Siuslaw's 22% and forced 30 turnovers. Additionally, the Lions' 19 total assists on 26 made field goals is a number that would make a professional team proud.

While 10-5 overall may not be a record that screams "state title contender", context throughout the season matters and there are a number of reasons for Lions fans to be excited about this year's girls' basketball team.

Since starting the season 1-2, Cottage Grove has gone 9-3 in their past 12 games, winning by an average margin of 21.5 points in the nine victories, including triumphs over Valley Catholic (OSAA 4A #10) and Henley (OSAA 4A #12).

The losses, on the other hand, were to a Washington high school ranked #5 in their classification, an OSAA 5A team (Ridgeview) and #3-ranked Hidden Valley. In a number of those games throughout the



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The big Lions' win meant more second-half playing time for players like sophomore Halle DeGarlais (31) and junior Jaden Lufkin (20).

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