

Umatilla girls' comeback bid falls short

Viking boys hold off Vale, claim EOL co-lead

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

In its first showdown with defending state champion Vale, the Umatilla girls basketball team struggled from the floor in both taking good shots and making them.

Thursday night, another poor shooting night from the Lady Viks and a big first quarter from Vale doomed Umatilla to its first consecutive losses this season as Vale came into The Pit and downed the Lady Viks 43-35.

Umatilla trailed 41-30 with just 1:38 on the clock and cut the lead to as few as six points in the final minute but couldn't get any closer than that.

With the loss, Umatilla (16-5, 4-2) trails Vale (18-1, 6-0) by two games in the Eastern Oregon League and is still up on Nyssa by two games.

"Too little, too late," Umatilla head coach Scott

Bow said of his team's effort. "We just didn't have enough left in the tank. That's a big gap to close."

Aleesha Watson led the Lady Viks in scoring with nine points, and Iri Campos had eight. Watson made just one of six from deep in another rough night from the floor.

"(We) just gotta get her more opportunities," Bow said of the sophomore. "We tried to get her a bunch of opportunities (Thursday), but (Vale's) defense adjusted really well and denied her most of the game. I think, as a team, we need to do a better job of finding ways to get her open."

Vale led by as many as 15 in the fourth quarter before Umatilla started to chip away at the score. Campos and Cassandra Galbraith had back-to-back hoops off of Vale turnovers. Watson got one to go two possessions later, and Vale called timeout with 4:45 on the clock with Vale up 35-26. Out of the timeout, Vale stretched the lead back out to 39-26 with three minutes to play.

Courtney Dohman scored her second basket with 2:13 left off a Vale turnover, and



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Umatilla's Aleesha Watson (20) and Vale's Kami Hawkins (2) watch a loose ball bounce out of bounds during the first half of Vale's 43-35 win over the Lady Viks Thursday at The Pit.

Mari Paz was fouled and made one. Then the frantic comeback bid began.

Watson was fouled and hit both free throws, shrinking the lead to 10 at 41-31. Vale coughed it up, and Galbraith had a free look at the basket and was fouled. She made the free throws, cutting the lead to eight. Vale called timeout, turned the ball over again and Galbraith laid it in to cut the lead to six with 19.9 seconds left. Umatilla finished with 13 steals, but couldn't come up with any in the last 20 seconds.

Umatilla plays Vale for the third and final time Feb. 14 in Vale. The girls play again at 5 p.m.

(MT) today in Nyssa.

BOYS BASKETBALL

UMATILLA 45, VALE 42

In a game that played out almost exactly like its predecessor last week, the Umatilla Vikings edged the Vale Vikings 45-42 Thursday night in The Pit.

Eric Garcia didn't have quite the night he did when he went for 33, but he still scored 19 points, including eight in the third quarter.

Umatilla was down two at halftime but came out hot in the third when Garcia and Tristan Sanguino each hit three-pointers to put Umatilla up. Garcia then made a layup and was fouled to grab a small slice of momentum.

"It was just that third quarter for us that the hoop was a little bit bigger for us and shots decided to fall," Umatilla head coach Derrek Lete said.

With the win, Umatilla ties Nyssa at 5-1 in the EOL and has an overall record of 11-10. Umatilla heads to Nyssa today. Tip-off is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. (MT).

LEGACY:

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before construction began. Hardin said it sat for a while — maybe a year, Hardin wasn't entirely sure — out in the field adjacent to the lot where the gym would be built, and after awhile it was time to do something with it.

It wouldn't be too far from the truth to say that HCS got a lucky a couple times in the process of building its new gym.

After clearing and leveling the land to create the parking lot, HCS had all this extra dirt that needed to

be removed, but the school didn't have anywhere to dispose of it without paying a hefty fee.

As it turned out, the Hermiston Irrigation District was burying recently built canals, and the two struck a deal, and the dirt was simply taken away.

"I would imagine what we probably saved \$50,000 from them taking the dirt out so we had enough space to start building," Hardin said.

Local companies did the installation, did the framing, painted the floor. A professional come in and painted the lines for the basketball court. He did them all by hand in a day.

That guy did the court at Northwest Nazarene University, too, Hardin said, adding he watched one of NNU's games on TV and was looking at the court to see what the quality of work was like.

As we spoke, another man walked up and said the floor was so pretty he didn't want to step on it. I think it's safe to say the floor turned out better than expected.

The vaulted ceilings were built to eliminate any possibility of a basketball or volleyball hitting the roof. The concrete floors saved money — the concrete was about a 10th of the cost of wood — and allow for a

wider variety of events to take place there. Wood floors look great for basketball, but they can be expensive to install and maintain and are difficult in some situations. Concrete floors erase that.

In all, the project cost about \$1 million, Hardin said, and it's not completely finished. Progress moved sort of at a snail's pace for a while, and the floor was finished over Christmas break. There are still classrooms to be finished in a small mezzanine-type area overlooking the gym, and baskets have yet to be installed for the full, college-sized court. When I was there, they were playing

on a smaller side court that already had the baskets in place.

I felt like I understood what the project meant to Hardin and HCS.

I went to a small Catholic K-8 school, and I understand how happy the school and students are to have their own gym. I told Hardin this: Our gym at St. Rose was really small. It wasn't wide enough to have a fully-arching 3-point line; it cut off before it could get to the corner. A few guys from opposing teams would step out of bounds, not knowing it was the sideline, not the 3-point line. When we would go to other schools, the big

floors would take our energy and honestly disrupt our schemes because we weren't used to playing on big floors.

But we always had practice space, and about half of our games were at home, so I can't really relate to not having a space for play. But I do understand the pride Hardin displayed when he looked around the building.

Things like that are legacies. They have people inside of them, written and carved into every joint, every steel beam, every screw. It's a point of pride to say "That's our gym over there. That's where we play."

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