

Free-throw line propels Lady Jays past Bearcats

Written by Jim Metcalfe

Friday, December 28, 2012 2:02 PM -



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SPENCERVILLE — St. John's looked like it hadn't played a girls basketball game for 10 days Thursday night, especially being without the services of leading scorer in senior Jessica Recker, out with an injury.

That is until the second half when the Lady Blue Jays took advantage of deep foul trouble by Spencerville and used the free-throw line to emerge with a 50-26 non-league hardwood victory at Spencerville.

The Jays (5-3) canned 21-of-33 free throws (63.6%) versus 10-of-16 by the Lady Bearcats (62.5%).

The Lady Bearcats (1-8) took advantage of a cold-shooting Jays' squad (6-of-20 in the first half and seven turnovers; 14-of-36 for the game — 1-of-7 from deep — for 38.9% and 16 errors overall) to lead 18-17 at the end of a half.

However, the hosts struggled with fouls in the third period, getting whistled for 10 in the stanza alone (26 for the game versus 13 for the visitors) — three of them illegal screens — and putting the Jays in the double-bonus before the horn blew. Three Bearcats, including senior Abby Freewalt (4 points, 3 boards), sophomore Katie Merriman (4 caroms) and freshman Caitlyn

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Probst (5 boards), were called for their fourth fouls in the stanza. The Jays took the lead for good on two tosses by senior Katie Vorst (17 markers, 9 boards, 3 steals) at 7:25 and they canned 11-of-13 singles in the stanza, including two by junior Emilie Fischbach with no time left on the clock, to finish off a 21-4 third period and grab a 38-22 bulge.

“We started to get better ball pressure defensively. They were hurting us some with penetration in the first half and I felt we took that away a lot better the second,” Jays mentor Dan J. Grothouse said. “Our guards also got more comfortable dealing with their defense and started to get the ball where it needed to go — inside. Katie and (freshman) Sydney (Fischbach) got more active inside as well.”

First-year Spencerville coach Warren Pughsley figured it was a similar pattern most of the season.

“Sometimes, it’s the first half that we struggle or even a quarter. We haven’t put together 32 minutes of consistent basketball yet,” he explained. “We got a lot of fouls called on us and when you are as young and inexperienced as we are, when a senior like Abby gets in foul trouble, it affects us in a lot of ways. Those are things you have to work through and grow through.”

The Jays’ lead bounced between a high of 24 — the final margin — and 18 as the fourth period finished off the contest.

St. John’s shot 2-of-8 in the first period and turned it over five times. On the other end, thanks to their trademark man-to-man scheme, the hosts couldn’t take full advantage. Sophomore Schylar Miller (team-high 15 points) got off to a hot start, scoring five of the team’s nine points. As well, Freewalt scored all four of her markers. When Miller drove to the basket with 16 ticks on the clock, Spencerville held a 9-4 edge.

Spencerville’s man-to-man defense continued to cause problems for the Jays in period two, helping them build their largest lead of the game at 16-8 on two singles by Miller at the 4:12 mark. However, the Jays began their rally in earnest on a layin by Vorst at 3:50. The Jays finished the quarter with a 9-2 spurt to get within 18-17 on two singles by junior Brooke Zuber (6 points, 4 caroms) with :00.8 on the clock.

In sum, St. John’s added 32 rebounds (13 offensive) as sophomore Tara Vorst added seven.

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They host Coldwater 6 p.m. (junior varsity) Thursday.

"We started off very sluggish — both teams did — and we picked it up better as the game wore on," Grothouse added. "Again, we just had to figure out where we needed to be, especially at our guards. We started to get more aggressive as the game wore on and we fought through screens better as the game wore on."

In toto, Spencerville ended up 8-of-33 shooting (0-of-5 treys) for 24.2 percent; with 25 rebounds (8 offensive) as freshman Jacey Grigsby added five; and 23 miscues. They host Botkins that same night.

"We handled the ball well for the first half but not the second," Pughsley noted. "Also, we need to better understand the length of our opponents. We drove but we went too deep and now you're going up against 5-10, 5-11 instead of 5-6. That bothered us."

In JV action, St. John's improved to 4-4 with a 20-12 victory.

Sophomore Samantha Wehri led the Jays with six, while junior Patricia Riley and sophomore Megan Miller had three each for the Lady Bearcats (2-6).

VARSITY

ST. JOHN'S (50)

Tara Vorst 2-1-5, Emilie Fischbach 0-5-5, Brooke Zuber 1-4-6, Rebekah Fischer 0-2-2, Katie Vorst 6-5-17, Erica Saine 1-2-4, Amanda Boberg 2-0-5, Casey Schnipke 0-0-0, Sydney Fischbach 2-2-6. Totals 13-1-21/33-50.

SPENCERVILLE (26)

Schylar Miller 4-7-15, Alyssa Mulholland 0-2-2, Karri Purdy 1-0-2, Katie Merriman 0-0-0, Jacey Grigsby 0-1-1, Abby Freewalt 2-0-4, Caitlyn Probst 1-0-2, Patricia Miller 0-0-0. Totals 8-0-10/16-26.

Score by Quarters:

St. John's	4	13	21	12 - 50
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Spencerville	9	9	4	4 - 26
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Three-point goals: St. John's, Boberg; Spencerville, none.

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JUNIOR VARSITY

ST. JOHN'S (20)

Rachel Pohlman 1-0-2, Emilie Grothouse 1-1-4, Olivia Kahny 0-1-1, Maddie Pohlman 1-0-2, Sam Kramer 0-0-0, Samantha Wehri 3-0-6, Colleen Schulte 0-5-5. Totals 5-1-7/13-20.

SPENCERVILLE (12)

Shania Johnson 1-0-2, Kennedy Sharp 0-0-0, Katie Merriman 0-1-1, Jacey Grigsby 1-0-2, Audrey Bowsher, Caitlin Probst 0-1-1, Karri Purdy 0-0-0, Megan Miller 1-1-3, T. Koenig 0-0-0, Patricia Riley 1-1-3. Totals 4-0-4/9-12.

Score by Quarters:

St. John's	5	3	5	7	- 20
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Spencerville	2	4	0	6	- 12
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Three-point goals: St. John's, Grothouse; Spencerville, none.