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DELPHOS — St. John's boys basketball head coach Aaron Elwer knew coming into the new basketball campaign that it would take time to figure out all the unknowns with his team.

With every game, his team will build experience. With experience, he will develop his bench and build depth. This team's depth will expand the Blue Jay bench and develop a player rotation.

The Blue Jays learned another lesson Friday night against Continental - patience, battling to a 34-31 squeaker.

Blue Jays eke out win over Pirates

Written by Larry Heiing Friday, December 20, 2013 9:33 PM -

The visiting Pirates jumped out to an early lead on a bucket by senior guard Austin Mansfield. Continental then began to attack the Jays with a full-court press. With only two minutes off the clock, junior center Tyler Conley picked up his second foul of the game, forcing him to the bench. St. John's finally got on the board with a pass from Eric Clark to Conley's replacement, Jake Csukker, for the easy layin. The Jays' defense forced a jump ball and gained possession. On the in-bound play, Csukker was fouled and converted a free throw for the lead. After another forced turnover, Alex Odenweller (11 points) drilled a 3-pointer from the corner. Continental began to pound the ball inside against the Jays man-to-man coverage with a pass to Gabe Williams to cut the lead in half.

At the other end, Clark picked up his second foul with three minutes left in the first. However, the home team forced another turnover and Andy Grothouse (8 points) took advantage, nailing a pull-up jump shot to end the first quarter at 8-4.

Delphos extended the lead to six to start the second stanza when Evan Hays found Grothouse alone at the foul stripe. The young Pirate team remained in their offense, making many passes around the Delphos defense until a drive inside by Mansfield (5 points) sliced the lead back to four. The Blue Jays turned up a full-court press but Continental scored after many patient passes resulted in easy layin by Joey Swager. Odenweller hit the bottom of the bucket with a three from the top of the key to make it a 13-8 game. Continental got an offensive rebound and bucket by Tyler Rue and later two free throws by Derek Troyer to make it a 1-point game. Senior Ben Wrasman entered the game for the first time and promptly made a pass to Ryan Koester, who nailed the 3 against the Pirate zone. Hays, playing tight defense, made a steal of a Pirate pass and drove the length of the court for the layin and the lead was back to six with 1:39 left in the half. The biggest lead of the evening happened when Wrasman again drove inside and passed it out to Odenweller in the corner; his 3-pointer extended the Blue Jay lead to nine. Continental's Rue was fouled on an in-bound play and converted the pair from the charity line as the first half ended with Delphos holding onto a 21-14 lead.

Continental's quick hands on defense forced a Blue Jay turnover to start the second half. After two quick buckets by the Pirates after defensive steals, the lead was suddenly down to

three, at 21-8. Koester scored the only points of the third for the Jays with a 3-pointer and a 24-19 lead. Zach Schwarzman made his 3-point attempt and the Pirates outscored the Jays 8-3 in the guarter to cut the lead to two.

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Grothouse stepped up and grabbed an offensive rebound and putback for the bucket, converting the free throw for the 3-point play and the lead was back to five. Foul shots then began to pile up as Continental and Delphos both made a pair. Odenweller was hacked on a sideline drive, sending him to the line in a bonus situation and making the pair for a 31-24 lead. A missed Pirate 3-pointer was rebounded by Grothouse and fouled, making both free throws and expanding the lead to nine with 3:27 left in the game. The Pirates came back with a 5-footer by Rue and a bank shot-and-1 by Swager cut the lead to four with 2:29 left. After a miss by St. John's, Rue popped a bucket to make it a 2-point game with only 32 seconds left. Koester missed the front end of a 1-and-1 and the Pirates set up for the last shot. Mansfield's 3-point attempt missed the rim and fell out of bounds. On the in-bound play, Grothouse was fouled and went to the line. Continental called timeout after he converted the second after missing the first free throw. Schwartzman attempted the 3-pointer at the buzzer which fell short and gave Delphos its first victory of the season.

After the game, coach Elwer said his team struggled against a patient Pirate squad: "We had to play defense for a long time against their offense, which made many passes looking for a good shot. They stuck to their offensive game plan and it forced us to be impatient on both ends of the floor."

The Blue Jays will go for their second win of the season against another Putnam County League foe tonight at 6 p.m. (JV tip) with Ottoville coming to town. Continental will take on McComb at home.

In JV action, Gage Seffernick made a trio of 3-pointers and Robby Saine had a pair for a 37-23 Blue Jay win.

Continental

Swager 2-0-5, Schwarzman 1-0-3, Rue 5-4-14, Mansfield 2-1-5, Williams 1-0-2, Troyer 0-2-2,

Baker 0-0-0. Totals 11-8-31.

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