

# Jones pours in 21: Strong second half propels Hawks over Southwestern in opening game victory

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CARROLLTON - Six-foot-three senior forward Gabe Jones poured in 21 points to lead the Carrollton Hawks to an opening game victory over the Southwestern Birds 67-54 in a non-conference game at Carrollton High School on Tuesday night.

“always been good, so we’re proud to get a win against them,” Jones said. “We didn’t come out very strong like we thought we would but we knew in the first game we’d have a little trouble getting into our offense. We came out in the second half really strong and took it to them.”

The Hawks, who trailed 30-29 at halftime and then 36-33 during the third quarter, turned up their full-court pressure. They forced steals and turned them into points and went on a 20-2 run that saw their lead build up to 15 points that they wouldn’t relinquish. Carrollton's up-tempo defense created 21 turnovers.

“There’s no mystery we like to pressure. That’s what we like to do. We got that in the second half,” Carrollton head coach Goetten said. “A lot of times it doesn’t happen until the third or fourth quarter. As long as we can keep guys on the floor and not in foul trouble, we feel like over time it’s hard to compete against that.”

Hunter Flowers and Nathan Walker each finished with 12 points, and Ethan Brannan added nine with six steals for the Hawks.

Southwestern whose record drops to 2-3, is fielding their youngest team for quite some time, but head coach Jason Darr was quite pleased with their effort and noted his player's grittiness.

“We got tired a little bit in the second half, but the biggest thing for us is that our kids are pretty resilient and we didn’t panic, so that was good,” Darr said. “Carrollton is crazy athletic. They’re just long and quick and do a lot of good things.”

Point guard E.J. Kahl led the Birds with 20 points and was a perfect 8-for-8 from the free throw line. 6-foot-4 sophomore Addis Moore scored 15 points and collected seven rebounds while fellow 10th grader Brady Salzman added nine points and eight boards.

Southwestern did not have the services of senior Carter Moore (averaging nine points per game) who sat out because of an injury.

“E.J. was probably our best kid tonight. He was all the over the place and handled the ball well that got us going and kept us in the game for a while,” Darr said. “Addis is a good young kid and works hard. I was proud of our kid's ability as hard as they could play and thought we got everything we could get out of them.”



Carrollton got out to a 10-2 lead, which included three-pointers by Brannan and Jones, but the Hawks would end up shooting 3-of-18 from beyond the arc. Southwestern got back into the game and trailed 15-12 as the Hawks battled foul trouble with Walker, Graner, and Garrett Settles all picking up two fouls in the early going.

“We still felt pretty comfortable but kept getting in more and more foul trouble. We gotta work on that,” Goetten said. “We like to pressure, but our guys have to read the referees. If they’re going to be calling it that way we gotta adjust.”

After weathering the early storm, the Birds took advantage of the Hawks fouls by making free throws coupled with the fine play of Kahl, Moore, and Saltzman. They eventually led 30-27 before a late basket by the Hawks cut the lead to one at halftime.

“I thought executed pretty well to get back into the game and pull away in the second quarter,” Darr said. For our kids and the lack of experience that they have, I thought we played okay.”

Carrollton had a 13 point lead with under six minutes to play, but Southwestern cut the deficit to 57-50 with under three minutes to play as the Hawks continued to play fast offensively. Fortunately for them, they were able to get a combination of rebounds and steals to break out in transition and get layups to help put the game away.

“I think it was first game jitters getting out in the floor in a real game situation for the first time and after halftime, we did a good job of bouncing back and coming out playing how I know we can play,” Jones said.



