

Hawks fall to Routt Catholic in opening round of Waverly Holiday Tournament

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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WAVERLY - They had opportunities late on, but the Carrollton Hawks didn't take advantage as they fell to the Routt Catholic Rockets 62-48 in the first round of the Waverly Holiday Tournament at Waverly Elementary on Wednesday morning.

"We dug ourselves a hole and chipped away. We just let our foot off the gas," Carrollton head coach Matt Goetten said. "We got into a position where we could've put the pressure on them and didn't do it. We didn't take advantage and let those opportunities go by."

The loss brings the Hawks record to 3-6 and extends their losing streak to three. Additionally, this is their fourth straight loss in the Waverly Tournament.

Carrollton moves into the consolation bracket and will play the hosts South County, who previously beat the Hawks 64-50 on Dec 3. That game is scheduled for a 9 a.m tip-off.

Gabe Jones had a game-high 17 points and was followed by Jacob Graner's 15 which is a career-high for the junior forward.

“We came in here today and had nothing to lose,” Graner said. “ we were falling today. didn’t have a whole lot of size, so I took advantage of that,”

Graner was one of the few positives for the Hawks as he was a force in the paint offensively despite feeling a bit under the weather going into the game. While Carrollton is still finding pieces, Goetten feels that Graner fulfilled some of his potential that he’s shown in practice.

“I wasn’t sure what I’d get out of him today. He really answered the call,” Goetten said. “It’s kind of what we’d been looking for out of him all year. He’s demonstrated that in practice a lot where he’s unstoppable, and I thought today he tried to do that. He had a nice game offensively.”

Routt moves to 6-3 and will play the No. 1-seeded West Central Cougars at 10:30 a.m. after the Carrollton-South County game.

Drew Winters and Dylan Marshall each tallied 15 points for the Rockets. Sophomore Cory Ronan was right behind with 14 points.

Carrollton held a brief 5-2 lead in the early going, but Routt went on a 16-0 run that included three triples. Graner scored two straight buckets to stop the bleeding, but the damage had been done as the Hawks trailed 22-9 heading into the second quarter.

After the Rockets established their long-range efficiency, the Hawks made adjustments to stop that threat, but that allowed them to drive to the basket. Carrollton consistently turns teams over in numbers, but today Goetten wanted a more conservative approach given Routt’s offense.

“We kind of changed our defensive strategy today knowing that they’re a dribble, drive, penetration team. We didn’t want to take too many chances whereas other games we’ll take that chance,” Goetten said. “I didn’t want to take too many risks over the top gambling and losing, and then having them get to the middle of the lane to kick out for an open three.”

Ronan scored the first basket of the second quarter to give the Rockets the largest lead of the game at 25-9, but the Hawks got back in it. Led by Graner’s presence in the paint, Carrollton got on a 12-2 run while getting the likes of Marshall, Ronan, and Ryan Lindsey in foul trouble. Routt, however, managed to get back up to a double-digit lead before Carrollton freshman Grant Pohlman made it 32-23 before halftime.

Carrollton started the second half well after another Pohlman basket got them to within five at 35-30 midway through the third quarter, however baskets Marshall and Ronan

got the Routt lead to 40-30. Jones quickly got it back down to six, but again they couldn't get a stop when they needed to as the Rockets led 47-36 heading into the fourth quarter.

After surrendering a basket, Jones and Graner knocked down three-pointers with two more buckets by Jones and Garrett Settles to get the Hawks back into contention down 51-46 with under four minutes to play.

Carrollton had a chance to get the game within one possession, but couldn't score, which allowed Routt to get on a fast break that saw Lindsey earn a bucket and a foul. His free throw was no good, but Marshall got the ensuing rebound and laid the ball in to give Routt a 55-46 lead.

They would outscore the Hawks 11-2 to close out the game.

Even though his team has lost three in a row, Graner believes the Hawks are coming together more as a team by learning lessons in defeat.

"Coach Goetten doesn't believe there's any moral victories in basketball. There's some of these games we come away with a loss, but we learn a lot as a team, and we've grown stronger together," Graner said. "It's just putting all the pieces together."







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