

Cooley's 25-Point Outburst Keeps Piasa Birds Close To Litchfield On Senior Night

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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PIASA - The Southwestern Piasa Birds hosted the Litchfield Purple Panthers Friday night and lost by a score of 68-61. The Piasa Birds hosted Senior Night for their two athletes Charlie Darr and Carson Cooley.



This game was definitely a slow burner. It didn't start off all that high-scoring when Litchfield took off to a 9-2 lead, forcing Southwestern to call a timeout and regroup. The stoppage didn't seem to do a whole lot as the Purple Panthers grew their lead 20-12. The scoring did pick up toward the end of the half but Litchfield was still up 30-24.

Things took a turn in the second half though. The Piasa Birds stormed back and before long it was a tie ball game after three quarters, knotted at 42.

A huge helping hand to that comeback was senior guard Carson Cooley. He started the game slow and said it himself that the nerves got to him a little, but he got over it on his way to dropping 25 points.

His performance got the crowd back into the game, but the contest really reached fever pitch when a Litchfield fan was ejected from the game and walked out by Southwestern Principal Mark Bealey. It seemed like all the momentum had shifted and that the Piasa Birds weren't going to be stopped, but in the end, it was free throws that decided this matchup.

“I thought obviously the effort was there; in a six-to-eight-point game, you look at the number of free throws and layups we missed, we probably had a chance to win this game quite a few times over,” head coach Jason Darr said after the loss.

When Litchfield went to the line, they didn’t miss. At least they didn’t miss as many as Southwestern. It came back to bite the Piasa Birds in just a seven-point game.

Junior guard Collin Robinson broke double digits with a 10-point night while junior forward Hank Bouillon scored nine. Sophomore guard Rocky Darr and freshman forward Ryan Lewis each added six.

With the loss, the Piasa Birds fall to 10-18 with three games remaining. But the Piasa Birds need to hang their heads high to finish the season.

Coach Darr believes his squad can accomplish much more. “Our kids work hard, and they know that we’re getting better. We’re playing some pretty good basketball teams right now and we’re just not quite there yet. They're working hard at practice, coaches are still coaching hard and we’re going to continue to do that.”

Southwestern will host Carlinville in their next game. That one is scheduled for Feb. 14 at 7:30 p.m.