

CM Beats Jersey On Special Opening Night

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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BETHALTO - It was a special night inside the new-and-improved gymnasium at Civic Memorial High School. The girl's basketball team took on conference foe Jersey in their home opener.

It wasn't your typical home opener though, CM had some things to celebrate. Before the 7:30 p.m. tip-off with the Panthers, CM held a short ceremony to remember last season's team that finished fourth place at the IHSA Class 3A State Tournament.

"It's special, there's no doubt about it," head coach Mike Arbuthnot said. "These kids, it's still fresh in their memory and they're very proud of their achievement. They know how hard they worked through the years. They've been working for that for seven or eight years. To see that happen and to be celebrated like that, no doubt it was special for everybody."

Once it was game time, the Eagles locked in and looked much like their normal selves again after dealing with some illness early this season.

It was senior forward Olivia Durbin who led her team with a 28-point performance. She missed her first couple of attempts, but once she found the basket, she didn't miss much after that. She dropped seven three-pointers before being subbed off a couple of minutes into the second half.



"She can shoot it, no doubt about it. We look for her and try to get it to her," Arbuthnot said about Olivia. "She kind of went through some illness the first couple of weeks and she's starting to work herself back into shape."

After growing a 35-16 lead at the half, Arbuthnot was able to get everyone some playing time, including for a brief moment senior guard Aubree Wallace.

She was subbed in for her final home opener to roaring cheers from the fans. She was immediately subbed back off as she's still not quite back from the injury that she sustained at last year's state tournament.



Wallace tore her ACL and meniscus back on March 4th in the state tournament third-place game at Illinois State University's Redbird Arena. It's an estimated nine-month recovery from an injury like that, a recovery period that she's almost back from.

"We kind of talked about it just for one little bit," Arbuthnot said about the special moment in the game. "But we'll see her again in a couple of weeks," he added.



As for other scorers, sophomore guard Reegan Twente had nine points including an impressive buzzer-beater three-pointer at the end of the third quarter to grow CM's lead to 59-20.

Junior guard Avari Coombes scored seven and sophomore forward Meredith Brueckner had six. Senior guard Hannah Meiser and freshman guard Marlee Durbin each scored three.

As for the Panthers, they were led by Tessa Crawford's 10 points. Cali Breden scored six, Meredith Gray had five, Cate Breden had three, and Ella Smith had two.

Arbuthnot said before the season that the Mississippi Valley Conference that they are in was going to be a little tougher this season, and he's happy to be 2-0 in that conference early on in the season.

"We've seen Mascoutah, who are a top team. We were able to go down there and get one," Arbuthnot said.

"And come out tonight in the home opener, it always kind of worries you nights like tonight because you don't know how the kids are going to take it, but I thought we came out with good focus, shooting the ball well and it was just one of those special nights and we're glad we were able to provide good entertainment for everybody."

After a weird start to the season having to deal with a lot of players down and out with illness, CM is still 5-2 on the season after a "unique" Taylorville Tournament, the same one the Eagles won last year.

"Taylorville Tournament was really unique because we could have easily won that thing and been 5-0. Or, we could have been 1-4," Arbuthnot said. "That's how close the games were and that's how close the teams were matched."

The Eagles will play another evenly-matched team when they're back in action at home on Monday to take on East St. Louis.

"Good ball club, very athletic," Arbuthnot said of the Flyers. "We had great games with them last year and I'm sure they're going to come here ready to play."

The last meeting between the two teams was in February, an overtime thriller for a regional championship, a game that the Eagles won 64-58.