

Tensions High As CM Snaps Jersey's Seven-Game Win Streak

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE – There are no friends in the Mississippi Valley Conference when it comes to girls' basketball.

“There are no easy games for anybody on our schedule,” CM head coach Mike Arbuthnot said referring to the improving MVC.

That was shown Thursday night after a game between the Civic Memorial Eagles and the Jersey Panthers ended in what can best be described as a fistfight.

After giving up their first-quarter lead, Jersey grew more frustrated with themselves and their opponent. Things reached a boiling point with less than a minute left in the game.

After a Jersey player was sent to the floor while battling hard for a jump ball, she immediately got up and appeared to land some punches on a couple of CM players. The Jersey girl, senior Bria Tuttle, was immediately sent out of the gym for her actions while the officials deliberated.

The game resumed, Olivia Durbin made both her free throws, and CM went on to win their seventh-straight game over the Panthers by a score of 57-38, snapping their current seven-game win streak.

Durbin went on to lead her team in scoring with 21 points, 13 of which came in the fourth quarter alone. She went 6-6 from the free-throw line. She was followed by junior Avari Combes with 13 points.

Starters Aubree Wallace and Meredith Brueckner each added five.

As for the Panthers, they were once again led by the 16-point performance from junior Tessa Crawford, a top-five scorer in the MVC. She was the only one to score in double-digits for Jersey.

After starting out a bit “flat” according to Arbuthnot, his team found themselves trailing 12-8 after the first quarter.

They regained a little momentum and flipped the script in the second. After a three-pointer right before the buzzer went through from Combes, the Eagles led 29-25 heading into the locker room.

Durbin’s two threes helped grow their lead to 40-32 after three and they sat in the driver’s seat. She continued to put on a show in the fourth to help lead the Eagles to the hard-fought win.

“I thought we played a lot more as a team in the second half,” Arbuthnot said.

His team made some changes defensively to shut down Jersey’s streaking offense and it worked.

Before the scrap at the end of this game, you could sense that a rivalry between these two teams was building. The earlier meeting was a bit lopsided with CM taking the 65-26 win over Jersey at home back on Dec. 1. Jersey, hot on their win streak, wanted a little revenge, but might have to wait until a possible third meeting in the postseason.

The postseason is what the Eagles are beginning to focus on after this conference win, boosting their confidence.

“We want to make sure we’ve got everything cleaned up going into the postseason. I feel like we have as good a shot as anybody to win the regional,” Arb said.

With the post-season approaching in a little under a month, these games are ever so important as the teams jockey for seeding positions.

This win brings CM to 10-11 on the season (4-3 MVC) while Jersey slips a little to 14-8 (1-6 MVC).

The Eagles will be back in action on Saturday against Taylorville, a team they fell to 50-41 in their third game of the season. They were dealing with some illness then and are fully recovered now. That game has a 7:30 p.m. tip-off at Highland.

Jersey won’t play again until Thursday when they head to Jacksonville on the 19th at 7:30 p.m.