



Piasa Bird Boys Basketball Battles Past Oilers, Improve To 14-11

by Nathan Tucker

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WOOD RIVER - With long-time Southwestern boys basketball head coach Jason Darr missing Tuesday night's game at East Alton-Wood River, the voice on the visiting bench was different, but the result was a familiar one for the Piasa Birds. The visitors withstood an early EAWR shooting onslaught and took over in the second half en route to a 59-54 victory, their eighth win in ten games in January.

It was Southwestern's assistant boy's basketball coach, Shaun Watson, providing that different voice from the bench tonight for the Piasa Birds. Head coach Jason Darr, in his 13th season at the helm of the boy's team in Macoupin County, missed Tuesday night's contest due to an illness.

The first quarter promised a high-scoring affair, with both teams draining three-pointers and trading baskets. Piasa Birds sophomore center Ian Brantley notched 14 of his game-leading 20 points in the first quarter alone, seemingly always finding a backdoor lane to the basket against the EAWR defense.

"I thought our guys played well, really executed under pressure," said Southwestern coach Shaun Watson. "(Wood River) is a tough place to play, a good program, so I was proud of our guys' effort and the execution they had tonight. We played an overall team game."

"I think we handled some early pressure," said Watson postgame. "Down the stretch, the third and fourth quarter, I felt we were pressing the issue a bit. We don't try to stall or anything, we just look for the best shot possible."

The Oilers took a slim lead into the halftime break but couldn't find the shooting touch when they needed it. Leading scorer Seth Slayden had a tough shooting night from the floor, finishing with seven points, well below his season average of 16 points per game.

EAWR was led offensively by the duo of Jakob Gerber and Devon Green, who contributed 18 points and 10 points respectively. With Seth Slayden having an off night, Green and Gerber had to pick up the scoring slack to keep the Oilers in the ballgame till the final seconds.

With a slim lead in the fourth quarter, Southwestern saw the game out with clutch shooting from the floor and most importantly, from the free throw line. Big free throws from Collin Robinson and Hank Bouillon kept EAWR at an arm's length and gave the Piasa Birds the victory on the evening.

“Any time you can get to the stripe at this point in the game and have the opportunity to seal the deal on free throws, it's big for us.” Shaun Watson added on his team's effort down the stretch. “Early in the year we struggled a bit from the free throw line, I think we're improving on that and it was big tonight.”

EAWR slips to 10-16 with the loss and now looks ahead to a Friday night rivalry and conference showdown as they host Roxana. Southwestern improves to 14-11, winners of eight of their last ten, and controls their destiny in the South Central conference at 2-2.