

Walleck Leads With 17 Points, Maberry Adds 13, Roxana Defeats EA-WR 59-34 In Backyard Rivalry Game

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
December 16 2023 7:59 AM





ROXANA - Chris Walleck led the way for Roxana with 17 points, while teammate Sean Maberry came up with 13 points as the Shells were in control from start to finish in taking a 59-34 win over backyard rivals East Alton-Wood River in a Cahokia Conference Mississippi Division game Friday night at Larry Milazzo Gym.

Roxana was in control from virtually the start and used a physical style to take the win over a young Oilers team. And it's always a win that's celebrated in Roxana as well.

"Any time you can beat Wood River, it's a great win for us," said Shells head coach Mark Briggs. "This is one of our big rivals, and we didn't shoot the ball real well tonight, probably under 20 percent from five feet and out. If we would have shot the ball a little bit better, the outcome would have been a little bit different. I'm proud of our kids. Physicality was, for the most part, the difference in this game. Our kids were more physical, we owned the glass; I think we had 25 offensive rebounds."

Many of the players on the basketball roster were also members of the highly successful Shells' football team that went to the IHSA Class 3A semifinals before losing to Mt. Carmel. Much of the success from the football season has translated well into the basketball season.

"It does. You know, it does," Briggs said. "Our kids had a lot of success, and they're pretty fired up to play basketball and try to get into basketball shape from football shape. It's a challenge, but they're getting in shape through games. They're good kids, they work hard, and their efforts showed tonight."





Walleck was the team's leading scorer on the night, and he's also one of the football players who's coming off Roxana's successful season.

"Chris is one of our top returning scorers from last year, he shoots the ball well, he's been through the grind. He makes us look good when the ball goes through the hole," Coach Briggs said. "And he played good defense tonight, He guarded their best player. (Devon) Green. and held him to 10 points. And they were a tough 10 points for Green. So Chris has done a great job on him."

The Shells are now 5-4 with the win and things have gone pretty well for the team thus far, with the Holiday tournament season coming soon, plus a tough schedule with league games in the next week.

"Yeah, we're 5-4," Briggs said. "We've got a tough schedule, we go on the road next week. We have Columbia and Marquette. There are no breathers in the Cahokia Conference; every night is a tough opponent. That's what hopefully going to make us better and prepare us for the postseason, and we're in a tough Christmas tournament, too. We're going to go to Pinckneyville and play some of the best teams in the south."

The Oilers have a relatively young team, with a roster of only four seniors and dotted by sophomores and juniors. The team does work hard and keeps striving, no matter the circumstances.

"A little disappointed, because I do think our kids worked hard tonight," said veteran head coach Kevin Gockel, the team's first-year head coach. "They're just a very physical team that we had a hard time matching up with. We've just got to get more physical with them and learn to battle against them. They're coming off a great football season, and I think they're still kind of in that football mode, and they pushed us around pretty good tonight."

Although it's still a rather young team, the signs are there that the Oilers are going to be a good team down the road.

"I'm pleased with where we're starting to be," Gockel said. "Devon's our only senior who really comes back with a lot of varsity, he started last year for us. Malyk (Spiller) got some playing time, but other than that, the other three were not with us and not playing varsity. So, we're trying to develop into a good varsity team, and we're going to go through some growing pains. Right now, it's a little bit of growing pains, but we're going to try to get it worked out."

Gockel and the EAWR coaching staff know that the only way to get things worked out is to go back to the drawing board and keep working hard in practice to solve the problems and get better

The Oilers have divided their season into third, with the early season being the first part, and the Holiday tournament season, turning into the new year, being part two.

"We always try to divide our season into thirds," Gockel said. "We're still into the first third of our season, Christmas starts the second third of the season, where we really want to start playing a little bit better. I think this team is starting to figure it out. We're starting to play a little bit better, and hopefully, we'll get some success over the Christmas holidays at that tournament."

The two teams traded baskets to open the game, with Harrison Smith canning a three and Spiller scoring to give EAWR an early 7-2 lead. Roxana, led by Maberry, Evan Wells and Walleck, then went on a 10-0 run to give the Shells a 12-7 lead after the first quarter. Another exchange started off the second quarter, after which Roxana started to pull away, going on a 7-0 run to extend the lead to 19-9, forcing an Oiler time-out. The Shells went on to outscore EAWR 6-3 the rest of the period to take a 25-12 lead into the locker rooms at halftime.

Smith drilled a three for the Oilers to start the second half, cutting the lead to 25-15, with Aiden Briggs countering with a three of his own and Walleck converting a three-point play to give Roxana a 31-15 lead. From there, Michael Silas and Briggs helped lead the Shell to outscore the Oilers 14-11 to take a 45-26 edge after three quarters. In the fourth, EAWR kept plugging away, to its tremendous credit, but the Shells came up with the answers in going on to their 59-34 win.

To go along with Walleck's 17 points and Maberry's 13, Roxana got nine points from Briggs, five points each from Trenton Hollaway and Silas, four points from Jackson Garman, Wells had three points, Cade Smay scored two points and Jake Newton had a single point.

Green led EAWR with 10 points, while Tamarion Marshall and Smith each had six points, Spiller scored five points, Malachi Carter hit for four points and Tookie Smith scored three points.

The Oilers are now 1-10, and play at home next week at EAWR Memorial Gym, meeting Salem on Tuesday night, then play Greenville on Thursday, both games starting at 7:30 p.m., then play at the Carlinville Holiday Tournament against Litchfield on Dec. 26 at 1:30 p.m.

The Shells go to 5-4 and are on the road next week, playing at Columbia Tuesday and at Marquette Catholic next Friday, Dec. 22, both games tipping off at 7:30 p.m., then play at the Duster Thomas Holiday Invitational in Pinckneyville Dec. 27-29.



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)