

Crawford's 30 Points Helps Panthers Battle Back To Beat Knights

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
January 6 2024 1:09 PM



TROY – The Jerseyville girls basketball team is on a bit of a roll right now.

The Panthers won their sixth straight game with a 50-44 win over Mississippi Valley Conference foes Triad on Friday night. The teams now split the regular-season meetings as the Knights won 47-41 back on Nov. 27 in Jerseyville.

“I wish we could get them both every time, but it doesn’t always work that way,” Jersey head coach Caleb Williams said. “But we’ve evolved and got better along the way, here later in the season.”

The teams traded the lead early and often in the first quarter.

Triad’s Delaney Hess put the first points on the board but Meredith Gray would quickly answer with a three-pointer. Hess went to the rim again and scored before Tessa Crawford answered with another Jersey three to go up 6-4. From there, the Panthers grew to a 15-7 lead after the first quarter.

In the middle of the second quarter, Hess scored seven straight points to tie the game at 19-19 before Savannah Hildebrand’s basket took a 21-19 lead for Triad. Gray scored back-to-back baskets for the Panthers to regain the lead at 23-21 at the halftime break.

During that Triad run, coach Williams wasn’t impressed with his team’s defensive effort.

“That was really hurting us late in the first quarter and all of the second quarter was our transition defense,” he said. “We weren’t getting back quick enough and took advantage of that. That was one adjustment we made at halftime, there’s no jogging back, just sprinting and they did. They made that adjustment and fixed that problem.”

Crawford scored the second half’s first five points with a three and another basket to extend the lead to 28-20. But Triad went on a 12-0 run, making four straight threes to take the lead back at 33-28. Erica Boyce made a couple of shots from deep as well as threes from Makenna Witham and Hess.

“A couple of the girls we were going to allow to shoot all game long started hitting there late, so we had to go back and man up on them,” Williams said.

The Knights led 36-30 after three quarters.

After trailing 40-34, Jersey used an 11-0 run to take the lead at 45-40. It all started with Gray’s and one basket that really got the Panthers fired up. Ella Smith scored a basket right before Crawford connected for a three-point play, making her foul shot to take the lead at 42-40.

The Knights would go on to miss some easier layups toward the end of the game and also got themselves in some foul trouble. The Panthers made them pay by making their free throws and putting the game away.

“The girls regained their composure and once they got the lead back, you could see that they weren’t going to let it up again,” Williams said.

Crawford ended the night with 30 points. She scored 12 in the fourth quarter alone. She now sits with 1,534 career points.

“When you’ve got a girl like Tessa Crawford, you try not to over-coach her, you just let her do her thing,” Williams said.

Gray finished with 13 points while Smith had five and Anna Kribs scored two. Jersey only had four scorers on the night.

As for the Knights, they only had four scorers as well. Hess led with 17 points while Boyce had 14. Hildebrand finished the night with seven points and Witham had six.

Triad falls to 9-8 on the year and will play next at Mt. Vernon on Jan. 9.

Jersey improves to 11-8 and hosts Gillespie on Monday before another big MVC clash at Civic Memorial on Friday, Jan. 12.

“We’ve got a lot of work to do when we go see CM,” Williams said. “Scoring wasn’t necessarily a problem for us in that game, we scored 50-something points, but they scored 70-something points, so we’ve got to tighten up our defense when we go see them.”

The Eagles won 75-52 in Jerseyville back on Dec. 1.