

Lady Eagles Pick Up Conference Win Over Jersey Before First-Round Loss To Okawville In Highland Tourney

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
January 13 2024 3:32 PM



CIVIC MEMORIAL 62, JERSEYVILLE 47

BETHALTO – The Lady Eagles capped off a busy work week with a big Mississippi Valley Conference game against Jerseyville on Friday night (Jan. 12).

After wins over Teutopolis on Monday (43-26) and Chatham Glenwood on Wednesday (57-38), CM was looking for its fifth straight win, and they got it.

Ella Smith gave the Eagles a good, early scare when she drained back-to-back threes to open the contest, but CM battled back.

“We’ve been in those situations before,” CM head coach Mike Arbuthnot said regarding the early deficit. “There’s no reason to get excited. We just had to buckle down a little bit, get into our flow. Once we get our transition going, we’re a hard matchup with most teams.”

The Eagles eventually got the lead back at 13-12 and, ending the quarter on an eight-point run to go ahead 17-12 after one.

Avari Combes scored the first five points of the second quarter with a basket and then a three-pointer to go up 22-12. CM stayed in control the rest of the game, leading 35-16 at halftime and 48-33 after three.

Avery Huddleston led the Eagles with 17 points while Combes had 16.

Isabelle Edwards scored eight points, Meredith Brueckner and Gracie Miller each scored five, Marlee Durbin and Reegan Twente each scored four, and Marley Ogden scored three.

All CM had to do was control Jersey's one-two punch of Tessa Crawford and Meredith Gray.

“They’ve got a great player; she draws a lot of attention,” Arbuthnot said regarding Crawford. “I thought we did a better job on her this time than the first time we played them. They only had a couple kids that scored. The game plan was obviously to contain Crawford and Grey. In the first half, I think we set a good tone, second half it got away from us a little bit.”

Crawford, Jersey’s lone senior, averages 21 points per game. That’s exactly where she ended up Friday night while Gray added 16. Smith finished with eight points and Casey Kallal had two points.

The first time the two played this season, at Jerseyville, CM won 75-52. Crawford scored 29 in that game while Gray had 14.

After Friday, CM improved to 19-3 and 6-1 in the MVC. Jersey fell to 12-9 and 3-4 in the conference.



OKAWVILLE 57, CIVIC MEMORIAL 50

HIGHLAND – In one of the more anticipated first-round matchups of the 37th Annual Highland girls basketball tournament, the CM Eagles met up against the Okawville Rockets.

CM, ranked No. 7 in IHSA Class 3A, had a quick turnaround after the game against Jersey just 18 hours prior, trying to keep a five-game win streak alive.

But the Eagles wound up with their fourth loss of the season, to the Rockets, who are ranked No. 6 in Class 1A by the Associated Press.

Some would argue that the first-round matchup didn't make a lot of sense. The Eagles were ranked the eighth seed in the Highland Tourney. 11

“I don’t know. I don’t totally agree,” Arbuthnot said regarding his team’s placement. “When you look at who’s in this tournament, and you start seeding and looking down, maybe we could have been up one or two spots, but Highland is six, and we were eight. I know they had to slide Taylorville in there somewhere.”

“I really don’t have an issue with it,” he continued. “I know that it’s tough to seed this. I know it because I had to do it. You try to keep the teams that have already played each other, or the ones in the same conference, away from each other.”

But that’s not entirely accurate as Alton and O’Fallon are on the same side of the bracket. As are CM and Triad. As are Waterloo and Highland. As are Okawville and Nashville.

Arbuthnot previously said that seeding this tournament is a nightmare as he helped run it during his time as Highland head coach from 2012-2018.

This year there are seven state-ranked teams in it, so there was no getting around the tough first-round draw and no possible way in making everyone happy.

“I don’t have a problem with it. It was a good game for us,” Arb concluded.

When it came down to game time, CM dug itself an early hole that it wouldn’t get out of until midway through the third quarter.

Okawville, who is 15-5 on the season, jumped out to an early 8-2 lead thanks to a three from Raelyn Obermeier and back-to-back baskets from Alayna Kraus.

The Rockets kept on and led 20-11 after the first quarter,

CM used a seven-point run to open the second and cut the deficit to 20-18, but Okawville outscored the Eagles 6-2 the rest of the way for a 26-20 halftime lead.

Krauss opened the second half with a pair of technical free throws, but CM went on a seven-point run to cut the lead down to 28-27.

A basket from Isabelle Edwards gave CM its first lead at 31-30, but Kenley Hackstadt’s three on the next possession made it 33-31 Okawville.

Avery Huddleston tied it up at 33-33 before another three from Obermeier. Huddleston scored another basket and then CM went ahead 38-36 after Marley Ogden’s three. That’s how things stood after three quarters.

Edwards scored to open the fourth and made it a four-point CM lead, but the Rockets used Madisyn Wienstroer's three-point play and another Kraus basket to go ahead 46-45.

Avari Combes scored as did Meredith Brueckner to give CM a 49-46 lead, but Okawville would score 10 free throws down the stretch to put the game away.

"We had a four-point lead a couple of times in that fourth quarter, but hit a couple of big shots, Arbuthnot said. "We put so much attention on No. 5, Krauss, and they had some other people step up and hit some big shots."

Kraus, who averages 22 points per game, finished Saturday afternoon with 18. She's always a tough ask to guard.

"We traded off on her," Arbuthnot said. "I had Huddleston on her, I had Combes on her, I had Durbin on her. We traded off because I know she's a great player and that she exhausts kids."

Krauss was one of two Okawville double-digit scorers. The other was Wienstroer with 13.

Combes finished with 14 points, Huddleston had eight, and Durbin and Edwards each scored seven for CM.

The Eagles fall to the consolation side of the bracket and will take on Belleville West on Monday at 4 p.m.0.