

Carrollton Cruises Past Panthers In Second Round Of Lady Hawk Invitational

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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CARROLLTON - The Jersey Panthers took the 13-mile trip north on Route 67 Tuesday night, looking to avenge a loss from earlier in the season.

The Carrollton Hawks bested Jersey 71-64 back on Dec. 9 in a non-conference rivalry game. The two met again in the second round of the 49th Annual Lady Hawk Invitational and it was once again Carrollton that won, by a score of 51-38.

It was the first time the Hawks have beat Jersey twice in a season since 2001.

It meant a lot to returning Carrollton head coach Brian Madson.

"Absolutely. Day one, when I took over the program I had December 9th marked on the schedule," Madson said. "Our girls played their butts off in that first game, and once we found out we were going to play again, I told them it will be another challenge."

Madson, who coached the Hawks from 2013-2016, returned after Blaine Hartwick resigned after seven seasons, three regional titles, and a 125-65 record.

"The first one is more personal with me," Madson said of the Dec. 9th win. "I'm from Jerseyville, been there the past eight years; but the second one, it definitely is sweeter. Now we have a chance to fight for the championship. We have to go through Father McGivney, but I keep telling the girls that this is our year to win it."

The Hawks will play the No. 1 seeded Griffins in the first semifinal game on Thursday, Jan. 25 at 6:30 p.m. McGivney earned a first-round bye and beat Beardstown 54-35 to open their tournament.

Tuesday night began as a close affair between the Hawks and Panthers.

Cali Breden opened the game with a three-pointer and the Panthers got out to a 5-2 lead. A quick nine-point run from the Hawks flipped the script and gave them the lead at 11-5. Lauren Flowers was responsible for nine of those points.

That ended up being the only time Jersey led as Carrollton pulled out to a 19-10 lead after the first quarter and 27-22 lead at halftime.

The Hawks opened the second half on a 9-3 run to improve the lead to 36-25 and eventually 40-28 after three quarters of play.

Carrollton outscored Jersey 24-16 in the second half, never allowing the Panthers an opportunity to get back in it.

"We lost them a little bit in transition on defense," Jersey head coach Caleb Williams said "and we also picked a really bad night to not be able to shoot. We had a horrible shooting night. We struggled shooting the ball tonight for sure."

Jersey, known for its three-point prowess, only netted four triples on the night.

The Panthers' leading scorer Tessa Crawford was held to 14 points on the night and just five in the second half. She fouled out of the game with just under two minutes remaining. Breden added 11 points for Jersey and Meredith Gray had eight.

Lauren Flowers scored a team-high 23 points, Abby Flowers had nine points on three three-pointers, Darci Albrecht had eight, Megan Camden had six, and Hayden McMurtrie had four.

"Lauren's a special girl," Madson said. "She's just got an eye for the basket, and she's smart. She takes care of the ball, knows when to dish it off when she doesn't have a good shot, and a very unselfish player."

Jersey switched around defending Flowers, having multiple girls in foul trouble, allowing her to get open more times than not.

"I knew this was going to be a battle," Madson said. "I knew they'd be gunning for Lauren and Harper (Darr). I knew it was going to be a lower scoring game, but our girls came through and made the plays when we needed them to. I couldn't be prouder of the girls."

Carrollton improves to 17-6 on the season and have now won four in a row.

Jersey slips to 15-10, snapping a three-game win streak.

The Panthers are 10-2 in their last 12 games, the two losses being to Mississippi Valley Conference rivals Civic Memorial and now Carrollton.

Coach Williams say that he wouldn't trade any of those wins if it meant beating his rivals.

"We want to win them all," he said. "I think they want them all the most. We just got outplayed tonight."