

Muskies trip Prairie girls again

Written by Tom Fruehling

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In their four years, the Prairie girls have never defeated Muscatine in the two teams' traditional season opener.

They certainly had their chance Saturday night at home but were flummoxed by turnovers and missed free throws.

After leading early, the Hawks ended up losing 56-46.

A veteran squad that made it to state last season, the Muskies came out as cold as the weather outside, And they couldn't keep from fouling. But the Hawks failed to take full advantage.

Despite 14 first-half fouls by the visitors, Prairie made just eight of 15 free throws. And the host team threw the ball away 11 times. Still, they trailed only 28-25 at halftime.

"When you go to the line, you have to capitalize," said Prairie Coach Steve Doser of the missed opportunities. "And we had way too many turnovers."

Muscatine came out firing after the intermission, building its lead to as many as 17 and never looked back.

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"As seniors, we really wanted this one since we never beat them," said Cyerra Hutchins, who led her team with 15 points. "And we started out strong."

The Hawks took a 5-0 lead when Madison Dellamuth stole the ball and hit a long 3-pointer from the top of the key on her first shot of the night. When Hutchins scored on a rebound after missing two free throws, the Hawks jumped ahead 13-7 as the second quarter opened.

The Muskies didn't take their first lead until midway in the second period, using a pressing defense to throw the Prairie ballhandlers into a tizzy. Yet it was anybody's game at half with Muscatine leading by three points.

"Coach says the first two minutes of the third quarter are the key minutes," Hutchins noted. "They came out with three 3's, we had a couple of turnovers and it was all downhill from there."

What had been a manageable three-point deficit was 13 going into the final quarter.

The Hawks lost top scorers Alisa Weiland and Courteney McCrary from last year's squad and are molding a new team together.

"We're trying to fill those shoes," Hutchins said, "and we're working out some kinks. But we'll get better."

Doser said he wasn't displeased with his team's overall effort.

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"I thought we came out with a lot of energy. In the second half, we didn't show much energy and didn't have much discipline in our offense.

"We've got to do a better job getting the ball inside. And we have to move the ball around to open up other avenues."

Dellamuth, who will play for Bradley University next year, ended the night with 10 points on 3-for-8 shooting.

"They're a good team," she said of Muscatine, "and it's always a battle against them. There's no shame in losing to them.

"But we could have executed better. And we need to work on our team chemistry. All of us need to step up and hold each other accountable."

MUSCATINE (56): Emily Clemens 6 3-3 17, Katie Shoultz 1 1-4 3, Kaylie Miller 4 6-7 15, Annabel Graettinger 1 4-7 6, Taylor Livermore 2 0-0 4, Emily Meeker 1 0-0 2, Taylor White 0 0-0 0, Erin Oppel 2 5-7 9. Totals 17 19-28 56.

PRAIRIE (46): Cyerra Hutchins 5 4-10 15, Emilie Rotter 3 4-7 10, Olivia Usher 3 2-4 9, Madison Dellamuth 3 2-2 10, Makenzie Stoffer 0 0-0 0, Taylor Moenk 0 0-0 0, Maddie Adams 0 0-1 0, Lynsey Altenhofen 0 2-2 2. Totals 14 14-26 46.

Halftime – Muscatine 28, Prairie 25. 3-point goals - Muscatine 3 (Clemens 2, Miller 1), Prairie 4 (Dellamuth 2, Usher 1, Hutchins 1). Total fouls – Muscatine 26, Prairie 22. Fouled out – Rotter.