

J-Hawks trimmed by Waterloo West

Written by Jim Sullivan, Waterloo Courier

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WATERLOO -- Justin Little didn't get worried when Waterloo West fell behind Cedar Rapids Jefferson by nine points in the first quarter.

Instead, Waterloo West's head coach got busy. So did his players.

The Wahawks rallied from that early deficit and held on at the end for a 51-48 victory over the J-Hawks on Friday night at Siddens Gymnasium.

"We needed that win," said Little after West evened its overall record at 2-2.

In the first period, the Wahawks needed a spark. They failed to score for the opening 5 minutes and 21 seconds of the game. Meanwhile, Jefferson pumped home three consecutive 3-point baskets -- a sign of things to come -- and grabbed that quick 9-0 lead.

So Little said, "It's early," and starting making changes.

First, the West coach scrapped the man-to-man defense he likes to play and went with a 2-3 zone that West had tried earlier in the season.

"Let me tell you, I'm an old-school coach who likes man-to-man tough defense," said Little. "My assistant coaches have been on me about trying some 2-3 zone, and it's working. We've gotta find what fits our kids. That's what I have to do."

Offensively, Little felt West needed to attack the basket more. The Wahawks got that done, too, especially in the second half. They hit 16 of 25 shots from the field, a 64 percent clip, a hot streak that included a 6-for-7 effort to start the fourth quarter.

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Thus, West took the lead for good on T.J. Morgan's putback midway through the third period. The margin peaked at 49-41 with 2:23 to play.

"We just talked about we wanted to get the ball in the post," said Little. "We wanted our guards to finish with layups. We've been shooting a lot of floaters, I thought, in our first two games.

"We attacked (Jefferson) tonight, and it showed. I was very proud of our guards and post players."

West got 10 second-half points, on 5-for-5 shooting, from 6-foot-4 Jacob Meyer and nine from guard Malik Green. It was enough -- barely.

The Wahawks hit just one free throw in six tries, missing the front end of two one-and-ones in the final 61 seconds. Jefferson thus crept within three and had the ball on the final possession with a chance to tie.

But Creighton Robinson, who had 22 points and six 3-pointers on the night, couldn't get to a low inbounds pass. Thus, the J-Hawks never launched even a desperation shot from behind midcourt.

"I thought it was a great team effort," said Little.

CEDAR RAPIDS JEFFERSON (4-2, 3-1): Jacob Olson 2-3 0-0 5, Creighton Robinson 7-11 2-2 22, Ky Kramer 3-14 2-2 9, Lucas Larson 2-3 0-0 6, Mark Floyd 3-7 0-0 6, Tyler Koningsmark 0-1 0-0 0, Brandon Wierderin 0-0 0-0 0, Marquise Monnahan 0-0 0-0 0, Spencer VanScoyoc 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 17-39 4-4 48.

WATERLOO WEST (2-2, 2-1): Carderrius Smith 3-8 1-3 7, Malik Green 4-9 0-1 9, T.J. Morgan 4-7 0-0 8, Alex Landers 2-2 0-0 6, Jacob Meyer 5-5 0-0 10, Lincoln Conrey 1-2 0-0 2, Lance Dunn 1-3 0-0 3, Xavier Hightower 3-4 0-0 6, Blake Thomas 0-0 0-2 0. Totals 23-40 1-6 51.

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Halftime - Waterloo West 17, Jefferson 16. 3-point goals - Jefferson 10 (Robinson 6, Larson 2, Olson 1, Kramer 1), West 4 (Landers 2, Green 1, Dunn 1).