

Quick start nets opening win

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's girls' basketball team opened the book and turned the page on a new season embracing the next woman up mantra after waving goodbye to all-stater Emma Henderson a year ago. Coach Tim Kohlbecker and his Lady Warriors didn't miss a beat running out to a double-digit advantage in the first eight and a half minutes of the game en-route to a 26-point lead at the break in a lopsided 58-22 victory over Argenta Oreana.

His four returning starters from last year combined to score 44 points with three of the fourth reaching the double-digit plateau. The Russo sisters Cassie and Lexie tallied 26 points scoring 15 and 11, respectively, and Alexis Koester accounted for 11, while Natalie Bates donated seven points and a team best four assists.

Bates and Koester each hit a bucket from the outside in the first frame, and C. Russo found her way to the hoop for an easy bucket. Russo also hit 5 of 8 from the line in the first eight minutes of action. Tuscola all but ended the game in the second stanza scoring 19 points on six field goals, three of which were from outside the arc. Grace Dietrich hit a three ball early on, then L. Russo and Ashton Smith each hit one later in the frame as the Warriors' offense looked like it was in mid season form in the opener.

It was more of the same after the break as the Warriors posted an eight-point run early in the third before coach K. looked to his bench. Koester hit a three to start the run, and the elder Russo put back one on the defensive end and laid one in on the offensive pushing the lead to 31 points heading into the final eight minutes of action. The younger version grabbed a team high eight rebounds in the game, including five on the offensive end as the Warriors moved to 1-0 on the year.

• Learning lesson for Lady Warriors

Usually double-digit stats in basketball are a good

thing unless the label at the top of the column is turnovers. Tuscola girls' basketball coach Tim Kohlbecker loves transition basketball and knows with that ball security some times is a little dicey. That was the case this past Thursday as the Lady Warriors suffered their first set back of the year falling to a good Tri-County squad 45-39.

Tuscola turned the ball over 18 times in the first half and 29 times total in the game.

"We need to do a better job of taking care of the ball," stated coach K. "There are going to be turnovers, it just seemed like tonight they came in bunches and some in a very weird way."

Alexis Koester opened the scoring with a fast break basket 30 seconds into the game, and Ashton Smith put one back on the offensive end for the Lady Warriors as the two teams traded points and leads throughout the first eight minutes of action. Tuscola gave up double digit possessions in the frame, but Cassie Russo finished off an old fashioned three in the final minute, and Natalie Bates hit both ends of a one and one, knotting the game at nine after one quarter of action.

Russo continued her offensive onslaught hitting two at the charity stripe and a short jumper to put the Warriors on top 13-10 with a minute gone in the second frame. That however was the final field goal of the half for coach K's group as the turnover bug limited shots late in the first half.

Tri County struggled from the field as well but found their way to the line erasing a two-point Warrior lead with four minutes left in the half with an 11-2 run. The Lady Titans converted two runners following turnovers and connected on 6 of 8 from the line to enter the break on top by seven 24-17.

Freshman guard Brynn Tabela hit an early 8 footer to open the third quarter, Koester followed with a short jumper of her own, and Russo put back an offensive

rebound as the Warriors scored the first six points of the half cutting the lead to one 24-23. Two offensive put backs by the Lady Titans and a late bucket netted seven points in the final 2 minutes and 22 seconds of the stanza, pushing the Warrior deficit to nine, 31-23, at the third buzzer.

The lack of offense was just one of coach K's problems heading into the final eight minutes of the game. Both Russos, Cassie and Lexie, picked up their fourth fouls in the last ticks of the third limiting their ability to push the pace on defense. Once more the Warriors had early energy in a quarter scoring the first six points of the fourth on a bucket by Natalie Bates and one by C. Russo. Koester hit both ends of a two-shot foul, cutting the lead to two 31-29. The Russo sisters scored the next nine points, 11 in a row in all as the two teams traded buckets until a late Tri County went coast-to-coast on back-to-back possessions sealing the deal on victory dropping the Warriors to 1-1 on the year.



Photo: Douglas Cottle

Warrior Natalie Bates drives during non conference action with the Tri-County Titans. The Warriors fell to the Titans 45-39.

Cassie Russo led the way on offense with 13 points on 4 of 10 from the field and 5 of 9 from the line while finding her way to seven rebounds. L. Russo was next

up with eight points connecting on 3 of 4 from the line and a one from outside the arc. The younger sister however found her way to a few more boards grabbing 12.

Koester added seven points to her season stat sheet, while Bates scored five points, handed out two assists, swiped a pair of steals, and grabbed six rebounds.



Photo: Douglas Cottle

TCHS Pep Band performs at halftime of non conference girls' basketball action with the Tri-County Titans. The Warriors fell to the Titans 45-39.

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Jim Voyles of Tuscola has been assigned by the IHSA to officiate the 2A State Championship game in DeKalb on Nov. 24. This will be his fourth State Title game in his officiating career. Also on his crew are Grant Nohren and Clint Howard of Villa Grove, Chris Long of Sigel, and Dr. Heath Grote of Mahomet. The crew works the whole season together, and it is Nohren's and Long's fourth trip, too. In his 45th year of officiating, Voyles has officiated with Nohren for more than 30 years. Voyles is also an IHSA football clinician charged with official training responsibilities. He served as Tuscola superintendent of schools and is currently serving on the Parkland College Board of Trustees. This past Saturday, the crew officiated the semifinal 7A game between Lisle Benet Academy and Batavia at Benedictine University. Pictured is Umpire Voyles and current Illini Kendrick Green (Peoria Central HS).

Events taking place at Tuscola schools this week

Tuesday, Nov. 21
• EP boys' basketball at LSA-6 p.m.
• HS girls' basketball vs. VG-Heritage-6 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 22
• No School-Thanksgiving Break

Thursday, Nov. 23
• No School-Thanksgiving Break

Friday, Nov. 24
• Football vs Lena-Winslow-10 a.m. State Title Game at DeKalb

Friday, Nov. 24 continued:
• No School-Thanksgiving Break
Monday, Nov. 26
• HS Scholastic Bowl at Sullivan-5:30 p.m.
• EP boys' basketball at Unity-6 p.m.
• HS freshman boys' basketball vs. ALAH-6 p.m.
• HS girls' basketball at St. Joe-Ogden-6 p.m.
• School Board Meeting at EP-7 p.m.

Does your home light up the neighborhood with a dazzling display of holiday cheer?

We are gathering a list of dazzling Tuscola displays to publish in The Tuscola Journal on December 13.

Don't let your hard work go unnoticed!

Please contact us by Dec. 8 with your physical address and a general description of where it is located on your street.

- Drop off at 115 West Sale St., Tuscola or
- Mail: PO BOX 170, Tuscola or
- Email: kayleigh@thetuscolajournal.com

The TUSCOLA JOURNAL