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SPORTS

Photo by Nick Herman

OH, NO! — Presbyterian College guard Tess Santos reacts after a teammate is called for an offensive foul late in the fourth quarter of Wednesday night's women's basketball game at Furman. To the right is former PC guard and current Furman player Taylor Petty. Furman won the game, 76-68.

PC women can't catch Furman in road defeat

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

The Presbyterian College women's basketball team wrapped up its non-conference slate Wednesday evening against the Furman Paladins at Greenville's Timmons Arena.

The Blue Hose played well in spurts but couldn't put together enough stops on defense nor keep the Paladins off the foul line in the fourth quarter, both of which helped send PC to the 76-68 loss and left it 2-9 on the season. Furman is 8-6.

Presbyterian College Head Coach Alaura Sharp noted how her team didn't communicate well on defense, with too many instances of opposing players cashing in on the good looks they got at the basket. Furman finished the game shooting nearly 45 percent from the field, including 10-for-22 from 3-point range.

"We stopped focusing on getting stops as a team, defensively. If there's one thing I was disappointed in, I guess, I felt we didn't have a lot of pop defensively," Sharp said.

The Blue Hose did show some of that defensive focus and energy at the start of the third quarter. After a 32-all first half, the Blue Hose came out of the blocks strong, scoring the first six points to force the Paladins to take a timeout.

Immediately after, however, Furman found its offense again and quickly surged ahead with nine straight points. From there the margin stayed mostly within two possessions, and PC was able to make some shots to help stay in the game, but could not pull closer than two, 55-53, with 6 minutes. 21 seconds left in regulation.

Furman's Le'Jzae Davidson did the most damage against PC's defense, scoring 28 points despite hitting just 6 of her 17 shots from the field. She also helped keep PC at bay in the fourth quarter at the foul line, making all 10 free throws she took. Furman, as a team, went 13-for-16 at the foul line in the fourth quarter, which matched the total number of PC's made free throws in the game.

For the game, Davidson hit 12 of 14 from the foul line and as a team Furman made 16 of 22 from the line.

Former PC standout Taylor Petty added 12 points for the Paladins, including a 3-for-4 night from 3-point range.

PC got a strong performance on offense from Shamani Stafford. The freshman posted her third 20-point game of the season against the Paladins, netting a season-high 28 points - 17 of which came in the first half.

Sharp said she needed to do a better job of getting Stafford open looks in the second half, which weren't as plentiful against the Paladins after she made 6-of -10 shots in the first 20 minutes. Stafford was just 3-for-8 shooting in the second half.

"She's tired of losing. She talks about that," Sharp said. "She stepped up really big. I'm proud of how she's played."

Another key Blue Hose player, Kacie Hall played 35 minutes in the contest, scoring 20 points despite a sore left knee that had a wrap on it as she left the locker room for the bus ride back to Clinton.

Her 20-point night marked the seventh straight game that Hall has scored in double figures. Over those games she is averaging 19.1 points per game.

"We need Kacie Hall to play major minutes for us," Sharp said. "We really challenged her at halftime and she came out and was a lot more aggressive."

Sharp said she is proud of the team's ability to get the victories it did in what was a tough non-conference slate but now the team enters Big South play with the hope that facing familiar foes will result in the kind of success PC has had in recent years.

The conference slate begins today (Saturday) when the Blue Hose visit former head coach Ronny Fisher and the Campbell Fighting Camels in Buies Creek, N.C.

Photo by Nick Herman

SOFT TOUCH — Presbyterian College forward Salina Virola goes up for a right-handed shot in the paint during the first half of Wednesday's game against Furman at Timmons Arena.

Blue Hose men hold off SCSU, back above .500

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

For the second straight year the Presbyterian College men's basketball team finds itself with a record of 8-7 overall – but to stay above .500 they had to sweat it out at the finish.

South Carolina State missed two shots in the game's final seconds, one on a block by PC's Cory Hightower, as the Blue Hose escaped Orangeburg with a a 72-70 victory. Hightower's block prevented what would've been a discouraging loss to a team that entered the contest at 2-11 overall, in what was the final non-conference game of the season for PC.

South Carolina State pulled within one point in the final three minutes before layups from Davon Bell and Hightower stretched the lead back out. Bell's last basket, a jumper with 21 seconds to go, accounted for the final margin.

Bell scored 19 points to lead Presbyterian in the game while teammate Adam Flagler had 16 points. Hightower added nine rebounds, along with six points.

South Carolina State's Damani Applewhite scored 18 points to pace four Bulldogs in double figures. Lavar Harewood added 17 points while both Janai Raynor-Powell and former Clinton Red Devil Ian Kinard had 11 points each.

Kinard's 11 points matched a season-high for the Clinton graduate. He also scored 11 points in the season-opening game against Brevard.

PC shot 50 percent from the field, marking the fifth time the team has reached such a mark, and also connected on 10-of-23 shots from 3-point range. PC turned the ball over only eight times, marking its third straight game with fewer than 10.

The Blue Hose start Big South play today (Saturday) with an afternoon tilt against newcomer USC Upstate at the Templeton Center. The game starts at 4 p.m.

Get in free: Fans who want to attend today's game can get in free of charge as PC celebrates Laurens County Day at the Templeton Center.

Any resident can get in free by bringing his or her ID with proof of Laurens County address.

AREA CALENDAR
Events subject to change

Jan. 5
Women's college basketball
Presbyterian at Campbell
Men's college basketball
USC Upstate at Presbyterian
Prep wrestling
Laurens at West Oak Invitational
Prep basketball
Clinton boys vs. Lexington, at Templeton Center

Jan. 8
Prep basketball
LA at W.W. King
Woodmont at Laurens
Mid-Carolina at Clinton
Women's college basketball
Longwood at Presbyterian

Jan. 10
Women's college basketball
Presbyterian at High Point
Men's college basketball
Presbyterian at High Point
Prep wrestling
Laurens at Wade Hampton Tri-Meet (with Mann)

Photo by Nick Herman

BACK TO THE COURT — Qua Fortson and the Laurens Raiders girls' basketball team were in action for the first time since Christmas when they hosted Wade Hampton Friday.

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