



Photo: Rachel Ray

Tuscola Boys Varsity basketball team. Left to right back row: Coach Bob Taylor, Jake Dyer, Preston Brown, Donovan Chester, James Boyd, Michael Calderon, Haven Hatfield, Coach Jacob Hilgendorf, and Coach Justin Bozarth. Left to right front row: Manager Dillan Alcorn, Aiden Beachy, Rajan Patel, Peyton Armstrong, Rohan Patel, James Parsley, Ben Tietzi, and Manager Doug Ruggles.

## Warriors girls basketball team's rally falls short against Tri-County

By Lenny Semeti

Tuscola's girls basketball team won the final two frames of their home opener against Tri-County but it was not enough as a second half comeback fell a few points short. Make no mistake no matter what anyone says there is no such thing as a good loss to a Coach but sometimes it's a launching point you can learn from. That is exactly what this young Lady Warriors squad can take from the eight-point 61-53 loss to the Lady Titans.

The maturation of head coach Tim Kohlbecker's team started happening right before the eyes of those attending the game at historic Tuscola Gymnasium. Tri-County took full advantage of unforced errors and quick shots by host Warriors jumping out to an early 12-4 hitting a three to open the contest while holding Kohlbecker's crew scoreless for the first three minutes of the game. Hope Dietrich broke the ice



Photo: Tracy Hornaday

Junior Brynn Tabeling and Senior Abbey Jacob during a break in the game.

draining a long ball from just inside the arc. Marissa Russo followed her lead and banged one in down low, Brynn Tabeling then found the bottom of the net from outside

the three point line but late five point run by the Titans equaled to a double-digit lead 20-8 at the first buzzer.

Sophie Kremitzki hit an early three in the sec-

ond stanza for the Warriors and Tabeling followed with bucket on a spin move. The backcourt duo both hit the double-digit plateau in the game as did Russo who led

all in scoring and boards with thirteen points and nine rebounds. Tabeling was next up with twelve points including a pair of threes, followed by Kremitzki who ended the night with eleven points. Tri-County answered with a pair of six point runs to end the period entering the break on top by twenty-one points 38-17.

Coach K stoked the fires at halftime and challenged his squad to compete and that they did scoring six-points in the first minute of the third quarter. Dietrich hit a runner fifteen seconds into the second half, Abbey Jacob followed with a buck off a steal 8-seconds later, Kremitzki then hit a jumper on the next possession and before you know it Tuscola was back in the game. Tabeling followed a Titan basket with an offensive put back and then followed a Kremitzki three with a long ball of her own helping the Warriors cut the lead to thirteen entering the final eight-minutes of the ac-

tion.

Kremitzki stepped outside for her second trey of the evening early in the fourth and Lainey Cummings and Jacob both hit fifteen-footers forcing the Titans to expand their defense opening up the middle for Russo. The Warriors post responded with six points from the field and two of three from the line down the stretch pulling the black and gold to within six points of the lead. The late surge was not enough as Titans made their free throws late dropping Tuscola to 1-1 on the year.

A loss is a loss no other way to put it but the Lady Warriors definitely ended the game with a lot more confidence than they started it with cutting their turnovers down significantly in the last sixteen minutes of the game. They learned the value of every possession and that alone is a battle won even if in the end it took a defeat to learn the lesson.

## Marissa Russo's leads Lady Warriors in her coming-of-age season

By Lenny Sementi

Coach Tim Kohlbecker is leaning on junior Marissa Russo's consistent scoring inside to fuel the offense for Tuscola girl's basketball team. The junior has reached the double-digit plateau in all four games this season including a 43-28 non-conference rout of Cerro Gordo this past Monday, November 25. Russo was good on seven of sixteen from the field and three of five from the charity stripe accounting for fifteen points. She also recorded her third double-double of the year hauling in a game-high twelve rebounds.

She was five points better a few nights later on Thursday but the extra offense didn't result in a win as the Warriors fell to a tough Villa Grove team 49-43. Tuscola fell to 2-2 in the early season despite a career-best twenty points and fourteen rebounds from Russo. Classmate Brynn Tabeling found the post three times in the lane early in the game while also adding ten points to her own season totals reaching double digits for the second time during Thanksgiving week.

Coach K's crew struggled in both contests outside the arc going a combined 0 for 24 on three point shots but it was the inside game and an intense defensive effort that secured the win over the Lady Bronco's. Tabeling found Russo twice in the paint in the opening frame and scored a runner herself giving the Warriors a 9-6 advantage after one period of play.

Russo banged her way to two more buckets early in the second and Tabeling drove the lane for a bucket and fed Hope Dietrich down low for another giving Tuscola a double digit lead with just over three minutes left in the half. That's where it would stay thanks to late second quarter free throws by Hannah Hornaday and Sophie Kremitzki handing Kohlbecker a twelve-point lead to work with at the break up 25-13. Dietrich and Kremitzki paired up for a combined thirteen points scoring five and seven points respectively.

Cerro Gordo never threatened in the third and fourth frames due to a suffocating black and gold defense that forced over twenty-five turnovers and swiped seventeen steals in the game allowing Kohlbecker to sub freely throughout the final two frames. Kremitzki was a ball hawk donating a game-high six steals to the cause finishing one better than the speedy Tabeling who corralled five, two of which she turned into buckets on the other end. "This was a great game for us to work on our depth," stated the coach. "Once we knew the game was in hand it allowed us to get a lot of players some experience and it also allowed us to work on various aspects of our offense and defense"

The first four minutes of the third quarter proved to be the difference in the game against Villa Grove. An eight-point run to open the third erased a four-point Warrior advantage at the break and ultimately

changed the game after the two area heavyweights traded leads eight times in the first two periods. The Lady Blue Devils stayed in front the rest of the way. Coach Dan Sappenfield's starters never left the floor throughout the forty-eight minutes of action dodging foul trouble late sealing the deal at the line late going six for six from the stripe in the final three minutes of the contest.

Tabeling had the hot hand early for Tuscola scoring five in the first and then joined with freshman Ella Boyer in the backcourt early in the fourth to keep it close. The Warrior guards accounted for all but eight of Tuscola's twenty-second half points. Boyer energized the lineup collecting all four of her steals in the final 10-minutes of the contest. She also was strong on offense late scoring all six of her points in a four-minute stretch in the final stanza. Dietrich posted a nice stat line as well grabbing six rebounds and four steals while providing four points on the offensive end.

Kohlbecker's crew was solid in every stat category but one, three point shooting. Tuscola hit just under fifty percent of their shots from the field on eighteen of thirty-nine from the floor but missed all fifteen attempts from down town. They turned the Blue Devils over fifteen times, stole eleven balls, and grabbed twenty-seven rebounds but it was not enough. "When you go 0 for 15 from the arc and also struggle at the free throw line (seven of thirteen) you

are not going to win many ball games. The first three or four minutes of the second half I feel is where we lost the game but a commend the

girls for playing hard till the end."

The Lady Warriors open Central Illinois Conference play when they return home

this Thursday night December 5, hosting a good Clinton team after starting the week on the road at Saint Joseph Ogden.



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