

SPORTS

Girls win three straight games; earn 20th win on senior night

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA - For the first time since the 2014-15 season the Arcola girls' basketball team has won 20 games (20-6). They did so with a dominating performance over Argenta-Oreana on Senior Night. The Lady Riders won 44-16 Monday at Nancy Stiff Gymnasium in a Lincoln Prairie Conference contest.

"It is pretty exciting," said Makenzie Thomas, one of six seniors that were honored prior to the game along with their parents. "It has been forever since we have won this many games. Our season has been going pretty well. We have had our ups and downs, but for the most part I feel like we have been doing pretty well together."

The last time Arcola won 20 games or more was when Nancy Stiff guided Arcola to a 21-8 season.

"It is my second to last Senior Night so it is starting to get to me," said Thomas. "Just seeing who came out to support us for our Senior Night was really appreciated by everybody."

Arcola coach Corey Roberts said, "Twenty wins was one of our goals at the start of the year. Twenty wins is a successful season and we have at least four more games and the regional."

Saturday Arcola used a strong fourth quarter in downing Marshall 45-41. The Lady Lions nipped the Lady Riders 52-51 in overtime in the Dieterich Holiday Tournament.

On Jan. 28 Arcola used a strong second half to cruise past Arthur Christian 65-35 in a non-conference game. The 65 points is a season-high.

It is the 12th time in the history of the program that Arcola has won 20 or more games.

The other seniors are Reyli Vega, Alessia Menoud, Eva Hopkins, Vanessa Condarco

and Emma Vazquez.

"It is a fun group of kids," said Arcola coach Corey Roberts. "We will miss them for sure."

Arcola 44, Argenta-Oreana 16

Arcola started slow and never trailed against the 3-20 Argenta-Oreana team, coached by Sullivan grad Nicki (Wickline) Hill.

"Senior Night was fun," said Roberts. "We started five seniors and they played the first 5:49 all together, which is something that they had not got to do this year. So, it was pretty cool."

Arcola scored nine unanswered points, including four by Thomas and a 3-pointer by Kelsey Moore.

The Lady Riders led 11-4 after a basket by Kharma Giles for the Bombers. That is when Arcola took control of the game with 19 of the last 21 points in the first half starting with a 3-pointer by Jacey Kessler to end the first period. Kessler scored five of the first six points of the second quarter against A-O's 2-3 zone, including a 3-pointer. After the final 3-pointer of the game with five and half minutes left in the half for a 23-4 advantage.

Arcola played a 1-2-2 and fell back into a man-to-man defensively.

"We didn't get a lot of turnovers on the 1-2-2, but it slowed them down," said Roberts. "We had a lot of inside-outside plays. We kind of struggled with layups as we were not finishing around the rim in the first half."

Arcola led 30-6 at the half.

"At halftime I told them to 'not worry about scoring 80 points,'" said Roberts. "Let's be patient on offense and flash when we need to flash. Do all of the little things. Whereas most games you can't focus on



AHS GIRLS BASKETBALL - Junior Jacey Kessler (10) eyes the basket in a varsity game played with Marshall at Arcola on Sat., Jan. 28. Arcola won over Marshall 45-41. Photo by Nancy Rairden.



AHS GIRLS BASKETBALL - Junior Kelsey Moore (11) goes up for an outside shot in a varsity game played with Marshall at Arcola on Sat., Jan. 28. Arcola won over Marshall 45-41. Photo by Nancy Rairden.

that as much as anything else. Instead of just playing and going fast let's slow it down and get better."

Arcola 45, Marshall 41

Neither team led by more than seven points in the game that had three lead changes.

Arcola trailed 27-21 with 1:28 left in the third after a basket by Marshall's Adi Scott. Arcola outscored the Lady Lions 12-2 over the next 4:07 starting with the final basket of the third, a 3-pointer by Hopkins. Hopkins opened up the scoring in the final period with a basket. Marshall's Marlee Heigton made a bucket. Sisk made a free throw and

Kessler followed with a pair as the Lady Riders took the lead for good, 30-29 with 6:22 remaining.

Moore drained her third and final 3-pointer (she was 3-for-5 from beyond the three-point line) and Arcola led 33-29.

Marshall made it a one possession game on four different occasions, including 41-39 with 2:53 remaining after a three-point play by Libby McFarland. Kessler made what would be the final field goal for Arcola against Marshall's 2-3 zone and Kaci Sisk made 2-of-4 free throws in the final minute for a six point lead with 14 seconds left.

"Redemption was our main

thing," said Moore. "Our first half was our second lowest scoring in the first half (Cumberland was the lowest). At halftime we were really talking about how we need to move the ball around and score points and get us moving."

Both teams started slow as the first 9:52 they were a combined 3-of-25 from the field.

Marshall led on three occasions by four in the first half, including 11-7 when Arcola tied the game for the first time at 11 on a basket by Moore, who had 11 points.

However, the Lady Lions, a member of the Little Illini Conference, scored the final six points of the half, including a putback by Scott for the 17-

11 advantage.

"We struggled early," said Roberts. "We were getting shots we liked. They were just not falling. I told them to keep doing what we are doing. We hit three 3-pointers in the third quarter and Sisk started rolling (scored 14 of her team-high 16 points in the second half). Moore shot lights out from three and stuff started falling."

Arcola was 8-of-15 from the field in a 9:26 stretch of the second half.

"Coach kept asking us if we wanted to go out of our press at halftime and everyone was like 'No'. Everyone wanted to keep on going," said Moore.

Roberts said the 1-2-2 didn't turn them over much,

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