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Marshfield girls knock off No. 4 Churchill in OT

By Scott J. Adams, Sports Writer

COOS BAY - Marshfield proved it can play against a ranked team Wednesday and became the first Class 5A team to beat Churchill this season.

Fueled by 20 points from Ali Worthen, 17 from Moriah Roberge and 10 from Brianna George, Marshfield survived a tenacious late rally to beat the fourth-ranked Lancers in overtime, 61-52.

Coach Debbie Dunbar called it the perfect answer for her Lady Bucs, who returned to Pirate Palace for the first time since a 16-point loss to then-No. 6 Willamette last Friday.

"This was just what we need tonight," Dunbar said afterward before reflecting on Willamette. "That game was such a disappointment and for us to come out and win like this against another ranked team, a very good Churchill team, nothing feels better. Our girls played hard for the whole game."

Marshfield (10-4 overall, 3-1 Midwestern League) streaked ahead to its biggest lead of the game at 41-25 after opening the second half with a 17-4 scoring run. Roberge capped it with a short jumper off of a feed from Taylor Scott. Roberge scored six points during the 4 1/2-minute run, and Marshfield looked primed for an easy upset. The defending league champion Lancers responded quickly, however, as Churchill (9-4, 2-1) mounted a 20-4 run to end regulation knotted at 47. The Pirates were held to just two points in the fourth quarter, when they had five turnovers.

"It wasn't a surprise to me - the way they fought back," Dunbar said. "We went on a dry spell, and they took advantage of it."

Churchill opened the rally with four free-throws following a shooting foul and technical foul charged to Alicia Johnson. From there, Tana Loftin buried one of her five 3-pointers to open the fourth and added another at the 5:11 mark.

"She's been a difference-maker for us this season," said Churchill coach Chris Stewart. "She can shoot all day if she's open."

Loftin, a 5-foot-3 shooting guard went 6-for-13 from the field and edged Worthen with a game-high 21

points. Loftin added three rebounds and three steals to her night, which was cut short when she fouled out with 1:12 left in the fourth. Her absence set the stage for a strong finish from Marshfield in overtime.

"She just got too aggressive at times. They were all good calls though, I thought," Stewart added."

At the start of overtime, Dunbar dialed an inbound pass to Roberge, and the 5-foot-6 sophomore sank a rainbow 3-pointer from the right of the key.

"I wanted to get the ball to her right away," Dunbar said. "We had to refocus for overtime and start strong."

Roberge's trey was her only field goal of the extended period, but gave the Bucs a quick lead not to be relinquished.

"Even after they tied it at the end, we knew we were ahead in momentum and just had to stay calm," said Roberge, who shot 3-for-5 in the second half. "We had a lot of motivation for this game. ... it's a huge win."

Marshfield showed tremendous poise from the start of the game, opening with an 11-4 run and forcing tough shots for the opposition. The Lancers ended the night shooting .294 (15-for-51) from the field with their starting point guard, Susan Smith, going 0-for-12.

Post players Mackenzie Fegles and Natalie Sprecher, two of Churchill's leading scorers this year, were held to 11 points combined with just two of those coming in the second half. Sprecher, a 5-foot-10 center, made 2 of 7 from the floor and finished with seven points. Fegles had four points and three boards.

Both juniors matched the Pirates front court in size but had trouble keeping up with Worthen in the paint. Marshfield's junior forward dominated off the glass, pulling down six rebounds while dishing three assists and shooting almost 60 percent (7-for-12) from the field. Scott, who started at forward, also came away with six rebounds for Marshfield.

"We really stepped it up tonight on defense," Roberge said.

Marshfield had to squelch an earlier rally that came midway through the second quarter. After Worthen sank a pair of free throws to put the Bucs ahead 16-7, the Lancers answered with layins from Fegles and Loftin to cut the lead to 24-20 at the half. Katie Chapman came off the bench and kept the rally going with four of her six points in the third quarter. Alexa Moore added 12 for Churchill, which had its five-game winning streak snapped.

Notes: The Lancers originally were scheduled to host the Pirates on Tuesday, but icy road conditions moved the game to Wednesday in Coos Bay, thus creating a five-game homestand for Marshfield. ... The Bucs face Thurston at home Friday and Thurston next Tuesday before playing their next five games on the road. ... Marshfield, Willamette and Churchill are atop the Midwestern League standings with one loss each. Churchill handed Willamette its league loss last week.

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