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Marshfield girls roll to big victory

By Scott J. Adams, Sports Writer

COOS BAY - Only hours after hearing about their new spot in this week's Class 5A top 10, Brianna George and the Lady Pirates were showing why voters penciled them in Tuesday night.

George scored a game-high 22 points and No. 10 Marshfield took advantage of poor shooting by North Eugene to beat the Highlanders 59-46 at Pirate Palace.

George set the tone for her big night in the opening six minutes of the game when she sank her first four of a career-best six 3-pointers. George ended 6-for-9 from beyond the arc and helped Marshfield cruise to a 15-4 lead at the end of the first quarter.

"How many 3s did she end up with? I lost count," said Pirates coach Debbie Dunbar after the game. "How big has she been for us - Brianna is just a tremendous shooter. She has so much poise."

Marshfield (9-3 overall, 2-0 Midwestern League) had a slow start on offense but found its rhythm in the second quarter with clutch perimeter shooting and solid work off the glass.

"We were aggressive, a little slow at first, but aggressive the whole game through. I really liked that," Dunbar said.

The Bucs shot .522 from the field in the first half and held a 14-12 edge in rebounds over the visiting Highlanders (2-8, 0-2). Marshfield junior Ali Worthen led her team with 10 points, three assists and 13 boards for her first double-double of 2007.

"We're playing with a lot of confidence right now," said Worthen, a 5-foot-10 forward. "Everyone is doing their part and making this team do great things this season."

And on breaking into the top 10: "We didn't care about it really. We just care about the 'six' next to Willamette."

Promptly following Tuesday's game, Dunbar's players were busy talking about Friday's homestand against the Wolverines, who entered this season as the coaches' favorite to win league. For her players, Dunbar

said there's no intimidation, just excitement.

"We have been looking forward to that game all season," said the first-year coach. "Boy, that's going to be a good one. ... We weren't overlooking tonight though. We knew what we had to do and got after it."

Marshfield may have a few possession issues to iron out before Friday. The Pirates turned the ball over 16 times against the Highlanders with five of those coming in the second quarter. These allowed North Eugene to pull within eight after trailing by as many as 16. Marshfield countered with a 5-0 scoring run to end the first half leading 35-22.

"We did turn it over a bit tonight," George said. "We have a lot of confidence on the floor though. We didn't panic."

Worthen and George were joined in double figures by Mel Stout, who dropped five points in both halves to end with 10. The 5-foot-9 forward shot 4-for-7 from the field with four rebounds and two steals.

"Their size was hard to match up with," said North Eugene coach Brent Coleman. "They have a lot of experience, too, and we don't. We played hard, like always, but just lack veterans to come through in the end."

Junior guard Makenzie Ficek led the Highlanders in scoring with 17 points in a game that featured no seniors. Ficek outshot three of Marshfield's starting five players combined, making 7 of 22 from the field and adding four rebounds and three assists. Her teammate Esty Geiger had 11 points and Kristen DeHaven scored five.

"We shot well tonight at least," Coleman added. "I think we're going to be okay this year in league. That Marshfield team is going to be a threat to win it."

The Bucs held their biggest lead over North Eugene in the third quarter when George hit a layup to make it 52-26 with 2:26 remaining. The Highlanders came back with an inspired 12-0 run but couldn't overcome their rough first half of shooting (9-for-21). The Pirates got a strong defensive effort out of their bench in the fourth period, and Moriah Roberge scored two of her eight points to ice the victory, Marshfield's second in a row.

"This was a good test for us tonight going in against Willamette and Churchill," Worthen said. "We're getting stronger and more confident."

After hosting Willamette on Friday, the Pirates face a stiff road test in No. 4 Churchill on Tuesday. Churchill won at Willamette Tuesday to match Marshfield's 2-0 start to league play.

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