

Big run lifts Blue Jays

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By Scott Dudinskie

DANVILLE—There has to be something in the cafeteria food at Central Columbia.

A day after the school's boys basketball team stunned Danville with a 21-point run in a district semifinal game, the Blue Jays girls pulled off an unlikely playoff scoring spree of their own.

Central fell behind Warrior Run by 13 points following a scoreless first quarter Wednesday but then turned the tables with an amazing 17-2 run for a halftime lead.



Warrior Run's Madi Welliver dives for a ball in front of Central Columbia's Lindsey Carl on Wednesday night.

Warrior Run 31

Central Columbia 35

The second-seeded Defenders kept it close throughout the second half until Madeline Murtin hit a tie-breaking 3-pointer and a pair of pair of foul shots, propelling the Blue Jays to a 35-31 District 4 Class AA semifinal win.

"They went on that run, and that was the difference in the ball game," said Warrior Run coach Jon Weaver. "We hung after that, but that 17-2 run killed us."

Warrior Run (20-6) played without freshman point guard Emily Webb, who tore her ACL in the quarterfinal win over Southern Columbia. Scoring leader Steph Shamburg was handcuffed by foul trouble and had just two points without taking a second-half shot.

The Defenders play fifth-seeded Montoursville in the District 4 Class AA consolation game for a state playoff berth. Central Columbia (15-9) faces three-time defending district champ Mount Carmel in the title game Saturday.

"I knew with the loss of Emily Webb—and that's very tragic—I knew Warrior Run was going to come out emotionally charged," said Central coach Jim Murtin, whose team beat Loy-alsock this season after trailing 14-0. "I give them a lot of credit. I didn't know how long they could last in that defense because they were (playing) outstanding man-to-man, on-the-ball defense.

"It looked like it took our girls aback a little bit. They had us on our heels."

Defenders freshman Madi Welliver scored half of her team-high 12 points in the first quarter, and Abby Fisher nailed a 3-pointer for a 9-0 lead. Then Shamburg and Welliver drove to the hoop on consecutive possessions to make it 13-0 with 2 minutes gone in the second.

The Jay's 5-foot-11 junior post, Lindsey Carl, got them on the board with a jumper in the lane, and she scored eight more points to cut the deficit to 15-14. Central, which missed six first-quarter shots and had eight turnovers, was 7-for-9 from the floor in the second quarter.

“The first shot, basic meat-and-potatoes into Lindsey Carl that helped,” said Jim Murtin, “and having a couple turnovers and rebounds, and, all of a sudden, our girls breathed a sigh of relief.”

Warrior Run was 0-for-6 with six turnovers during the seismic shift, which was completed when Allison McCracken curled to the hoop for a bucket and a Central lead with 1:12 left in the half.

“Obviously you’re deflated a little bit,” said Welliver, “but I thought coming out of halftime we played very well.”

The Defenders fell behind 26-19, not getting their first basket of the second half until Welliver scored down low with 1:14 showing. They closed the third with a 5-0 run and tied the score at 28 with a Laura Bastian drive at the 4:26 mark.

Murtin broke the tie 81 seconds later and, despite Chloe Eisenhuth hitting a pair of clutch free throws to make it 33-31 with 11 seconds to go, Taylor Knorr answered with a pair to ice it for Central.

“We didn’t catch any breaks toward the end. We were right there, one bucket away and we had a couple opportunities. Things just didn’t go our way.” said Weaver. “To play without your starting point guard and give the effort they gave, I can’t ask for any more. I’m proud of them. We took them to the wire.”