

Injury inspires Defenders in OT

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By Jake Felix

Warrior Run 45

Southern Columbia 36

TURBOTVILLE—Warrior Run players slowly walked to their bench during overtime with shock stretched across their faces. Their teammate remained prone on the court screaming in agony after a horrific knee injury that turned the once boisterous Defender gymnasium into complete silence minus those shrieking yells of pain.

Warrior Run's student section all dropped to a knee, and looked on opposite the Warrior Run bench where the players watched head coach Jon Weaver cradle the fallen Emily Webb into his arms and walk his freshman across midcourt from the baseline and to the end of the bench. An emotional group of Defenders gathered around each other and their coaches and came together with a new purpose. Webb had hit a game-tying 3-pointer at the end of regulation to rescue her teammates and now it was their turn to make sure Webb's effort didn't go to waste.

After the delay, Warrior Run scored 10 of the game's final 13 points of overtime and survived a gritty effort by the Tigers for a 45-36 victory in the District 4 Class AA quarterfinals.

"We had to play for her and we knew we had to win it for her," Warrior Run senior Steph Shamburg said. "We had to do something."

Webb gave the second-seeded Defenders a chance at overtime after knocking down a 3-pointer with 2 seconds remaining from the left wing and the Tigers holding a 33-30 lead. The freshman was scoreless and missed three foul shots before confidently stepping into the jumper with time ticking down on the clock and Warrior Run's historic season. The original play was designed to go to Abby Fisher, who scored 16 points, but the plan broke down. The Defenders (20-5) kept their poise, however, and worked the ball around the perimeter to Webb who buried the season-saving shot.

"It was a heck of a cross pass to Webb and she didn't even think about I," said Weaver. "For a freshman to step up and hit that shot without even hesitating... that was a big-time shot for a freshman. She's the reason we are moving on."

Warrior Run scored the first four points in overtime with back-to-back buckets by freshman Madi Welliver, who was battling a stomach bug, and Shamburg. Shamburg delivered an interior pass to Welliver for the first two points of overtime before driving hard to the basket for a 37-33 lead. A Reba Lyash free throw with 49 seconds left made it a one-possession game but Fisher delivered a layup and knocked down a pair of free throws after a Southern Columbia intentional foul with 17 seconds remaining to put the Defenders up seven.

"We played better in four minutes of overtime than we did the whole ballgame," Weaver said.

Shamburg who played all 36 minutes last night matched Fisher with 16 points and she added seven rebounds and a pair of blocks. The senior was constantly hounded by a stingy and aggressive Southern defense that made Warrior Run earn every inch of real estate on the floor.

Southern's speed and aggression led to 26 Warrior Run turnovers through regulation, but the Defenders never wavered and were just as scrappy as the seventh-seeded Tigers and tied the game twice in regulation over the final 28 seconds—the first on a Shamburg basket following a steal in the backcourt and the second on Webb's clutch shot.

Friday's win was Warrior Run's third over Southern Columbia (12-11) this season. The Defenders will play Central Columbia, another HAC-II rival, in next week's district semifinals. The No. 6 seed Blue Jays defeated the Defenders in overtime in Turbotville, while Warrior Run won at Central.

The Defenders will be without Webb who Weaver assumed tore her ACL. Following the game, the coach again picked her up in his arms and carried her into the locker room.

"I told her that I wasn't going to let anyone else carry her off the court," Weaver said. "If we were going to do it, I'm doing it."

Southern Columbia (36)

Mackenzie Clark 2 1-2 5, Reba Lyash 4 2-3 10, Shannon Daubert 3 1-4 7, Teanna Shutt 0 0-2 0, Haley Levan 3 1-2 7, Miranda Long 0 2-2 2, Christina Podpora 1 0-1 2, Jill Oley 1 0-0 3, Mackenzie Chaundy 0 0-0 0. Totals: 14 7-16 36.

Warrior Run (45)

Abby Fisher 6 3-3 16, Chloe Eisenhuth 1 4-8 6, Mackenzie Hays 0 0-0 0, Laura Bastian 0 0-0 0, Emily Webb 1 0-3 3, Steph Shamburg 6 4-8 16, Madi Welliver 2 0-1 4. Totals: 16 11-23 45.

Southern 8 6 8 11 3—36

Warrior Run 7 8 6 12 12—45

3-point goals: Southern 1 (Oley); Warrior Run 2 (Fisher, Webb).

Records: Warrior Run 20-5, Southern 12-11. Next: Warrior Run vs. Central Columbia, TBA