

Port boys hang tough, but Homestead prevails

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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Scrappy Pirates slowed by inconsistent play in loss to hard-nosed Highlanders

Backing down was not a problem for the Port Washington boys' basketball team last Friday night.

Matching up with a bigger, more athletic opponent was another matter.



Although the host Pirates did their best to stay in contention, they couldn't overcome a slow start against a talented Homestead team, which pounded out a 68-49 win in a North Shore Conference game.

"We wanted to come out and match Homestead's intensity and execute offensively," Port coach Brian Hebein said.

"We never backed down, but we had some breakdowns that hurt us."

Port, which was handed a 74-42 loss at Homestead in December, showed more fight in the rematch. However, the Pirates couldn't climb out of a 13-6 hole at the end of the first quarter.

After establishing their low-post game with 6-foot-7 center Luke Worthington, the Highlanders connected from the perimeter. They finished the first half with five three-pointers, including four in the second quarter, and took a 34-18 lead into intermission.

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Port's offense was slowed by the loss of senior guard Joey Burbach, who spent the last four minutes of the first half sidelined with three fouls. The Pirates also had numerous turnovers against Homestead's active defense.

Burbach came to life in the second half, when he scored 16 of his game-high 24 points. That total included a 15-for-15 effort at the free-throw line.

The Pirates also got a spark from sophomore guard Tay Jackson, who came off the bench to contribute 12 points.

"Joe had a good game offensively, and Tay gave us a lift," Hebein said. "But we had trouble matching up with them inside. When we clamped down hard on the post, they hit the outside shots.

"In the second half, we had to pick things up, and we gave up some easy baskets."

Homestead went on a 9-3 run at the start of the third quarter and stretched the margin to 51-24 by the end of the period. Port couldn't get closer than 16 points the rest of the way.

Worthington and Sam Kaegi each finished with 11 points to lead a balanced attack for the Highlanders, who had 11 players score. Kaegi had three of his team's seven three-pointers.

"I was pleased with our effort. Our team is improving," Hebein said. "Our goal is to keep working hard and match the intensity level of our opponents every game."

Homestead improved its second-place conference record to 7-3. Port slipped to 1-8 in league play and 4-13 overall.

This week, the Pirates continued their NSC schedule against Nicolet on Tuesday and will play a 7:30 p.m. home game against Whitefish Bay on Friday.

On Feb. 5, Port will host Milwaukee Lutheran at 7:30 p.m.

Image Information: SAM WEILAND and his Port Washington teammates faced a tall order in a 68-49 loss to Homestead last Friday. Photo by Sam Arendt