

Port boys refocus after late rally falls one hoop short in tussle with Germantown

It was a night of missed opportunities for the Port Washington boys' basketball team.

After playing from behind all night, the Pirates battled through the frustrations of errant shots and calls that didn't go their way to grab a chance at a come-from-behind win at Germantown last Friday.

But when a potential game-winning three-pointer bounced off the rim in the final seconds, Port was left with a 65-63 loss that kept it from tightening its grip on first place in the North Shore Conference race.

"This was one of those nights where things just didn't go our way," said Pirates coach John Bunyan, whose team had an eight-game overall winning streak snapped.

"In the first half, Germantown shot the ball really well and made six three-pointers, and we missed seven free throws.

"It was an uphill battle all the way."

Port, which fell to 6-2 in NSC play but maintains a one-game lead in the title chase, had trouble cracking Germantown's stop-Gasser defensive scheme. The Warhawks double-teamed the standout guard all over the court, intent on forcing someone else to beat them.

The strategy worked well for three quarters. Germantown made its shots while Port misfired from the perimeter, making just seven of 24 three-point tries for the game.

The Warhawks stretched a 20-11 lead in the first quarter to as many as 18 points in the third period and took a 52-38 advantage into the final eight minutes. That's when the Pirates returned the favor. Gasser, who scored a game-high 22 points despite the defensive harassment, led the charge.

Port pressured the Warhawks into repeated turnovers and rallied to cut the deficit

Road plan goes amiss for Pirates

Written by Steve Ostermann

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to 64-63 in the final minute. With 12 seconds left, Germantown's Josh Mongan went to the line for a pair of free throws.

After making the first, he missed the second, and the Pirates grabbed the rebound. Forced to hurry upcourt with no timeouts, Gasser drew contact on a shot but no foul, and the ball went out of bounds with five seconds left.

Port retained possession and got the ball to Luke Schueller, who took a three-pointer. His shot caught the rim and appeared headed through the basket but bounded out, ending the Pirates' last gasp.

"It was a really intense game. We battled back and had a chance to win, but we didn't play our game," Bunyan said.

"Anytime we end up shooting 24 three-pointers, we're not executing our offensive game plan. That was the biggest problem."

Bunyan said he wanted his team to take the ball to the basket more instead of settling for perimeter attempts.

"But it was a learning experience for us," he said. "We've already worked on ways to correct that so we make teams pay for double-teaming Josh."

In addition to Gasser, the Pirates got double-figure scoring from forwards Cory Steinmetz and Shane Kennedy, who had 14 and 12 points, respectively.

Mongan led the Warhawks with 18 points, and fellow guard Zak Showalter had 17.

The win pulled Germantown into a second-place tie in the conference along with Whitefish Bay and Homestead. All teams were 5-3 entering games Tuesday.

Port continued NSC play Tuesday at Nicolet and will host Whitefish Bay in another key game Friday.

On Feb. 9, the Pirates will host Sheboygan North in a nonconference contest.

Both games start at 7:30 p.m.

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