A slow start forced the Grafton girls' basketball team to play from behind on the road Monday night.

The early deficit also saddled the Black Hawks with their fifth straight loss, this time by a 50-37 margin against West Allis Central in a nonconference game.

Central jumped to a 12-6 lead in the first quarter and turned the game decidedly in its favor with a 19-9 run in the second period.

After trailing, 31-15, at intermission, Grafton was unable to mount a serious comeback in the second half. The Hawks held a 14-8 edge in the last quarter, but that did little except trim the final margin.

Sophomore Hannah Eichler led Grafton with 11 points, and Abbey Benzschawel had five, but none of their teammates scored more than four.

The loss, which kept the Hawks winless for February, dropped their overall season record to 9-9.

Central, which improved to 14-4, was led by a three-pronged attack that included 13 points by Janie Myles, 12 by Lauren Hibbard and 11 by Merhyn Kraker.

Grafton will try to get back on track Thursday when it returns to North Shore Conference play with a 7:30 p.m. home game against Milwaukee Lutheran.

On Saturday, the Hawks will host Luxemburg-Casco in a 7 p.m. nonconference contest.

Whitefish Bay 48, Grafton 45

The host Hawks owned a five-point lead with less than three minutes to play but couldn't hold on to nail down a conference win last Friday.

After trailing, 40-35, Bay finished with a 13-5 run that handed Grafton its third straight NSC loss.

"We felt pretty good with three minutes left, but once again we let a team come back on us," said Grafton coach Bob Maronde, whose team fell to 5-6 in league play.

"Right now, we don't have anyone who takes control for us. We need a floor leader, and it hasn't been there."

The Hawks, who defeated Bay on the road in January, held a 25-21 lead at halftime of the rematch and maintained a four-point edge entering the fourth quarter.

Carley Pfannerstill's three-point basket gave Grafton a five-point lead late in the game, but the Hawks managed only one field goal the rest of the way.

Eichler paced Grafton with 12 points.

The Blue Dukes rode the hot hand of Jessica Switzer, who finished with a game-high 21 points.