

# Wildcat Boys Roll Early, Fade Late

The bounce is back in Mulvane High School boys basketball coach John Darrow's step. At least it's a half-of-a-bounce, but it signifies that progress is being made.

A game after scoring only seven points, the Wildcat boys responded with a better effort, even though it produced a 56-32 loss to Oxford Thursday night, Dec. 9, in the final round of the Douglass Early Season Boys Basketball Tournament.

Oxford dished out the fourth straight loss to Darrow's Wildcats but there were some positives which came out of the game.

"The first quarter was the first time all year that we have played well together as a team and it was the first time that we have put it out on the court," said Darrow. "What the coaching staff has been telling them is what the kids put on the court and they finally saw that it works."

The Wildcats rolled out to a 15-10 lead after one quarter but that lead dissipated by halftime as the Wildcats scored only five points in the 2nd quarter and the Oxford Wildcats took the lead for good, 25-20, by the halftime horn.

Still, it was the first time under the new coach that the Cats had put everything

## Douglass Early Season Boys Tournament

### THIRD ROUND

Oxford	10	15	16	15-56
Mulvane	15	5	6	8-32
Oxford—	Todd Trullinger 6, Ross Bartelson 11, Mitch Potucek 6, Mike White 5, Darren Potucek 2, Josh Hills 9, Brad Klein 11, Mike Witte 5. FG 21 (1), FT 13-20, F 14.			
Mulvane—	Chris Brannon 5, Nick Pope 4, Chris Gerhardt 1, Jared Rice 2, Troy Johnson 4, Andy Hixson 8, Ryan McKnight 4, Jason Wilson 4. FG 12 (1), FT 7-11, F 19.			

Rose Hill 69, Douglass 58

together, and it gave Darrow a hope that more of the same was ahead of him.

"Specifically, our press break worked against them, our offensive execution was good and we worked well as a team against them," said Darrow. "Plus, defensively we were doing the little things like blocking out and being in the correct defensive position. However, they made adjustments and we didn't adjust accordingly after that first quarter."

Since practice started in November, Darrow has been preaching about being all on the same page, about playing together and good things will happen. But, it hasn't happened. "The main thing that is costing us is that we're not playing together and I think our inexperience goes along with that," emphasized the MHS coach. "You also start believing in your teammate. If I do this, there will be somebody there picking me up and we have preached and preached it over in practice but it hasn't totally sunk in. When everybody plays their role, we play good basketball. When you start trying to play somebody else's role, it doesn't happen. That's what happened in the second and third quarters."

Once Oxford made its adjustments, Darrow hoped the Wildcats would make theirs, but that didn't happen. "Our guys didn't adjust on the court as we wanted them to. That led to some players trying to do more than they were supposed to do instead of staying within the game plan." That enabled Oxford to out-score the MHS Cats, 31-11, in the middle two quarters to pull out to a comfortable lead.

"The main thing I would have liked to have seen in the second and third quarters is to have our kids settle down," added Darrow. "They got nervous quickly and we didn't show any composure. I think those are things that show up when you're not very experienced. We lost our composure and didn't show much patience on offense or defense. That's something we need to continue working in in practice—being patient—but it's difficult to practice. When things don't go their way, the kids tend to get nervous. That's just another sign of inexperience and leadership. We don't have a leader on the team and that makes it tough. But I think the guys are starting to

see their roles and what they have to do for us to have success. In time, I think everything will come together."

Darrow feels the Cats will improve offensively as the season goes on. The 32 points against Oxford was the high water mark for the season. After all, Mulvane was averaging only 18 points a game going into the third round game. "We're not scoring a lot of points but I think we're starting to get it to people where they are comfortable to score," said Darrow. "I think it's just a change of philosophy. I don't think it means my philosophy is better or the old philosophy is better, but it is what I want. As more guys buy into the program, I think we'll become more successful. We're trying to get the ball to people where they are comfortable and can score. That means getting the ball to the big guys down close to the basket and getting the ball to the guards outside where they can score."

Junior Andy Hixson was the leading scorer for Mulvane with eight points. Guard Chris Brannon scored five points and guards Nick Pope and Jason Wilson scored four points each as did 6-4 junior Ryan

McKnight and sophomore Troy Johnson.

One area Darrow feels is improving is in rebounding. "Hixson, McKnight and Jared Rice are doing a lot better job on the blocks in rebounding," said Darrow. If there's one aspect of our game that is getting better, it's our rebounding. We limited Oxford to only seven offensive rebounds. One of our goals was to keep them under 10, so we reached our goal. Those three kids are doing a good job in that respect. They're hitting the boards and also getting some put-backs." McKnight and Hixson had six boards each and Rice, Chris Gerhardt, Johnson and Brannon had three each.

Darrow's Wildcats will have the rest of this week to work on their game before jumping into their first Chisholm Trail League Division II outing at Chaparral Friday, Dec. 17. The Roadrunners haven't won a game either. "I went over and watched them play against Garden Plain and it was a lot closer than the final score (69-51) indicates," said Darrow. "They have a new coach over there (Kenton Rosehagen) and he's doing a good job getting their guys ready to play."