

Play Encourages Cat Coach



Senior Arin Leonard (33) and Andrea Valerio battle for a rebound at Chaparral

If you learn from your mistakes, you're going in the right direction. That's the general feeling Mulvane High School girls basketball coach Jayson Miller is getting as the Cat girls head into the Christmas holiday season.

Coach Miller isn't "Ho! Ho! Ho!-ing" his way into the vacation, but he is encouraged with the way the Wildcat gals played Friday night, Dec. 17, when they went to Chaparral for their first Chisholm Trail League game against the Roadrunners. Chappy pulled out a 54-50 victory, but the Cats played well in a losing cause.

In the junior varsity contest, the Wildcats couldn't keep a hot first half going in the third quarter and lost a 55-52 game to Chappy.

"We played from start to finish probably our most solid game of the season," said Miller, whose Wildcats slipped to 1-4 overall as they head into a two-week layoff for the Christmas vacation break. "I'm talking about all aspects of our game. We still made a lot of mistakes, but at least we put together a ball game. I felt like we did some things much better than our last game and that is what is encouraging for me and for the girls."

The 50 points was the most scored this season. Last year's Cats only scored more than 50 points three times all year.

The Wildcats started slowly, trailing by 10 points at halftime but Mulvane played better in the second half and actually made the game one of those "nervous games" in the final moments. The Cats were down seven with 30 seconds to go and senior Arin Leonard canned a three-pointer, cutting the lead to four. Mulvane got the ball back on a rebound and Leonard had two more shots in the last 10 seconds but couldn't get the ball down.

"Mistakes? We're still making them,"

admitted Miller. "We still are having difficulty against the pressure. The girls know the rotations but I think they get a little over-anxious. They look down the floor and throw it to somebody who isn't ready or someone who isn't looking for it, but I don't mind those turnovers because we're showing some aggressive play."

Kris Lazar and LaShelle Parker muscled their way to scores in the paint. Lazar scored a team-high 12 points and Parker had 10. Leonard finished with eight points and Kim Mangus scored six. More importantly, however, eight Wildcats scored points. Miller liked that thought.

"All the girls are playing at about the same level right now, and in some ways, that is great," said Miller. "It's an advantage for us to show that kind of balance and depth but we need to have some of our girls step it up a little. I'm thrilled that we can go 10 deep and there's not much drop off, but we would be much better off if we got two or three points more from everybody."

The Cat coach also likes the improvement he is seeing. "I think there are several areas where we showed improvement from our previous game," said Miller. "I think we're doing a lot better job running our half-court offense. I think 50 points speaks to that. If we can score 50 points every game, we'll win some ball games."

"And I think the girls are starting to see where their passing needs to go. I thought the girls started seeing where the holes were in their press. In the second half, I think we must have scored eight or 10 points off their pressing game. That is just a matter of basketball instincts. We see things sometimes a second late and unfortunately learning those things takes time and playing. I thought I saw more instinct in this game."

Miller doesn't know what the statistics said, but he isn't satisfied with Mulvane's rebounding. He feels it should be a Cat strength.

"And I think our rebounding game with Kris Lazar and LaShelle Parker is coming around but we need to focus more on it," added Miller. "And our guards have been grabbing a few rebounds, too. At Chaparral, they beat us up pretty good in rebounding early on. With our height, that should be something we win every game and we're not getting there. I think it just a matter of consistency."

Defense is another area Miller plans to work on over the holidays. "We've tried to keep it simple," said Miller, "and for the most part we did a good job against them. We didn't play our half-court defense as good as we could. We gave up too many easy points. And one of the reasons was Chaparral's offensive rebounding. We didn't do a very good job on the defensive boards and that kind of hurt us."

The Roadrunner jayvees went on a 23-5 run in the third quarter to wipe out Mulvane's 35-19 halftime lead and held on. Sami Booth hit a career-high 18 points and Kim Mangus scored 10 points. Parker finished with eight.

The girls will be back in action after the first of the year when they have their home opener Tuesday, Jan. 4, against Clearwater.

Varsity Girls

Mulvane	8	7	16	19	50
Chaparral	13	12	17	12	54
Mulvane	LaShelle Parker 10, Arin Leonard 8, Carisa Ward 4, Natalie Turner 4, Kari Leonard 3, Kim Mangus 6, Kris Lazar 12, Jackie Burkhardt 3. FG 23 (1), FT 3 (1), F 26				
Chaparral	Tabitha Cullop 10, Staci Latta 12, Emily Shirk 9, Krista Kastler 4, Ashley Inslee 16, Amy Misak 2, Virginia Brown 1. FG 21 (0), FT 12 (3), F 13				

Junior Varsity Girls

Mulvane	18	17	5	12	52
Chaparral	6	13	23	13	55
Mulvane	Melissa Doerfer 4, Michelle Dunkel 1, Kim Mangus 10, Kari Leonard 4, Sami Booth 18, Natalie Turner 3, Kris Lazar 4, LaShelle Parker 8. FG 20 (1), FT 11 (2), F 30				
Chaparral	Jennifer Giesen 2, Erin Shepard 2, Megan Gerber 11, Sharla Dunn 14, Randi Ward 8, Amy Misak 3, Tiffany Asper 5, Melissa Drouhard 4, Krista Kastler 4, Tiffany Prickett 2. FG 17 (0), FT 21 (3), F 23				