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Gwynn Park girls take control in fourth quarter

Yellow Jackets pull away from Forestville in final eight minutes

by Zachary Ward | Special to The Gazette



In what was a competitive game for three quarters, the Gwynn Park High school girls' basketball team outscored Forestville 26-6 in the final period Friday night en route to a 77-50 road victory.

Sophomore center Caira Washington led the Yellow Jackets with 20 points. Meanwhile, Gwynn Park did damage from the perimeter as well, connecting on seven 3-pointers.

"I've been waiting on that all year, I really have," said Gwynn Park coach Michael Strother of his team's long-distance shooting success. "We have so many shooters. We shot well today, I just hope we can continue."

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Forestville guard London Richardson gave credit to Gwynn Park's shooters for being hot.

"We didn't close out," Richardson said. "We made it worse."

Forestville played well early, and the score was tied 21-21 halfway through the second quarter. The Yellow Jackets had their hands full for much of the contest, as the Knights' stars posted their typical stat lines. Zairra Harris, who averages 22.4 points per game, had 13 rebounds to go with a game-high 25 points. Richardson (18.8 points per game) was good for 18 points, nine rebounds and eight steals.

However, those efforts were not enough to overcome the Yellow Jackets' depth. Eleven different players scored for Gwynn Park, compared to just four for Forestville.

"Our depth is very important," Strother said. "If somebody's having a bad game that day, we can put somebody else in. That's gonna carry us a long way in the playoffs, I think."

Forestville trailed by just seven entering the fourth quarter, but things got out of hand in a hurry as Gwynn Park opened the quarter with a 12-0 run.

"We have to work on being focused for four quarters," said Forestville coach Vincent McDuffie.

Despite the loss, McDuffie said he players would build confidence from playing three competitive quarters with one of the better teams in the conference.

"That's how we should play," McDuffie said. "At our best, that's how we look."

After opening the season 3-4, the Yellow Jackets have won nine of their last 10. Their only loss over that stretch was Tuesday night when league-leading Largo bested them, 69-56. They know the road will get tougher as the playoffs approach. Gwynn Park was the Class 2A state runner-up last year,

losing in the state final against Fallston.

"Coach talks about it every day," Washington said. "He says we gotta play hard and teams are gonna come after us. We gotta keep playing all four quarters."

Gwynn Park guard Channel Mackey said she was ready for the playoffs and confident of her team's ability to get back to the state final. Sophomore guard Genesis Lucas exuded similar levels confidence, adding that this year the goal is not just to get to the championship game, but to win it as well.

"I think we are ready for it, but we still have a lot of hard work to do," Lucas said.

"I'm just going to take it one game at a time," Strother said. "I love that my kids are confident, but we're gonna play this one game at a time, one quarter at a time, one possession at a time."

Gwynn Park 77, Forestville 50

Gwynn Park (12-5) 15 21 15 26 - 77

Forestville (9-8) 10 21 13 6 - 50

Gwynn Park: Caira Washington 20, Channel Mackey 13, Genesis Lucas 11, Jasmine Simms 8, Khrystunn Miller 6, Crystal Strother 6, Siara Jackson 5, Danielle Collins 2, Tiana Hall 2, Rabecka Lee 2, Kache Fields 1.

Forestville: Zairra Harris 25, London Richardson 18, Jamyra Gallmon 5, Shanisha Locke 2.

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