

## **A tale of two halves as Mustangs rally from 10 points down to win by 10:**

Roosevelt: 12-13-16-15=56 (3-6 Overall, 1-0 Big VIII League)

Corona: 15-20-06-05=46 (12-1 Overall, 0-1 Big VIII League) 3A-#1 as of 12/3

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At halftime of Tuesday's Big VIII league boys basketball opener Mustangs coach Stephen Singleton told his team that if they were going to win they'd have to hold Corona to single digit point totals on offense in each quarter. Roosevelt's players took that challenge to heart and held the Panthers to a total of eleven second half points as they rallied from a 10 point halftime deficit to prevail 56-46 at home Tuesday evening.

In the opening quarter it was Roosevelt's Coree Joseph (6 points) & Corona's Travis Jackson (5 points) who combined for the game's first eleven points as the Mustangs held an early lead at 6-5. Gaven Ramirez then joined the scoring party and banked in a three pointer giving Corona a 8-6 lead with 5:18 left in the opening quarter. With 45 seconds left in the period Ramirez (21 of his game high 25 points at halftime) connected on another three pointer making the score 15-10 Panthers. However a late Mustangs basket made it 15-12 after eight minutes of action.

With 5:20 until halftime Aamari Smith of Roosevelt had a steal and layup making the score 19-18 Corona working towards intermission. Jackson then answered with a three point field goal extending the Panthers lead to 22-18 with just under five minutes until halftime. It was 31-20 with 1:21 left in the quarter after Ramirez had a steal and score punctuated with an electrifying slam dunk. A Coree Joseph three pointer brought Roosevelt to a deficit of 35-25 at the half.

Panthers coach Chris Maffucci remarked about his team's first half offensive execution "I thought we executed our stuff really well, took good shots and converted on what we were able to get. With only four turnovers at half we also did a good job of valuing each possession but we needed to sustain it and ultimately couldn't."

The third quarter got started with both sides trading baskets. CJ Bellamy's three pointer with just under seven minutes left brought the Mustangs to an eight point deficit at 37-29. That was answered with a layup from Justin Dunn after Corona did an excellent job of breaking Roosevelt's full court pressure defense with 6:38 left making the lead 39-29 Panthers. It was then Brandon Porter's turn to step up for Roosevelt as he had four straight points off two layups (one of which was a steal & score) making the score 41-36 Corona with 3:15 left in the quarter. An offensive rebound and putback courtesy of the Mustangs Devon Benfield cut Corona's lead to 41-38 at the one minute to go mark and he ultimately tied it after three quarters splitting free throws with three seconds left.

It was a fadeaway jumper from Brandon Porter which put Roosevelt ahead in the fourth quarter at 43-41 with 7:46 remaining for their first lead since 6-5. G Little then went on and scored the next 11 Roosevelt points (9 of which came from three point range) in an excellent display of shooting covering 2:12 of fourth quarter action. After it was done that run gave Roosevelt a 54-41 lead with 4:30 to go. That was a lead which the Panthers were not going to overcome as Roosevelt got a 56-46 victory to start Big VIII league play.

Mustangs coach Stephen Singleton said afterwards about their defensive effort “We had a week and a half off prior to this game and just went back to basics on defense with a very young group. Defense is what this program has been built on and so it was nice to see us get the job done there.”

When asked about how huge winning the Big VIII league opener was Singleton said “At this point I was just looking for a win and it didn't matter who it came against. To beat a well coached Corona squad who will be a force to reckon with this season was huge for us. It was a goal of our guys to get this one and they came together to get the job done.”

G Little said of the Mustangs early struggles in 2018 “We had to trust the process. Our struggles weren't because of team or coach issues but they were just us not being able to finish off close games. This team still has room to improve but this was a pretty nice start.”

I also asked Little about a shooter's mindset during that kind of run and he remarked “Just keep shooting and working to get open so my teammates will give me opportunities.”

Maffucci went on and said about an upcoming five game stretch which includes the Estancia Tournament over Christmas Break & a Friday matinee at Valley View “That's what I talked about with them about before breaking our locker room. We had one bad half and are not going to let that define our season but we need to get back on the horse and get some of our mojo back for the rest of Big VIII league play.”

**Mustang Notables:**

G Little>>14 points (11 in the final quarter)

Brandon Porter>>11 points

Coree Joseph>>10 points

**Panther Notables:**

Gaven Ramirez>>25 points (21 at half)

Travis Jackson>>10 points

