

Lancers hot start to second quarter the difference in Division 2AA First Rd win:

Orange Lutheran: 07-14-17-05=43 (20-9 Overall) #12 Seed 2AA

Great Oak: 07-06-08-12=33 (19-8 Overall)

By: Derryl Trujillo

Inland Sports Senior Writer

Temecula, CA-

It's a fact of life in the CIF-SS playoffs that seeded teams will have to hit the road for opening round games as a result of poor finishes in difficult leagues. One of the teams facing that very scenario Thursday evening was Orange Lutheran's girls basketball team after an 0-4 Trinity League record. Awaiting the Lancers after an hour plus trip from Orange was a Great Oak team who had only been defeated once in a true home game. Behind 17 points from Heather Park & 11 from Caitlin Muller Orange Lutheran prevailed 43-33 at the Den over Great Oak. The Lancers earn a Saturday night date with Orangewood Academy at home.

It was a very low scoring first quarter as both teams struggled to find a comfort zone offensively. Great Oak's Ashley Waltz scored consecutive field goals on a runner & layup to give the Wolfpack a 4-2 lead with 4:30 left in the first quarter. The Lancers answer was a three pointer by Nicole Khanthaphixay giving Orange Lutheran a 5-4 lead with just under four minutes left in opening quarter action. Waltz got into the lane and scored again which along with a free throw from Madeline Clayton completed the Wolfpack scoring. With 35 seconds to go Muller hit a jumper from the elbow tying it back up at seven after eight minutes of play.

A 8-0 run from Orange Lutheran covering 2:24 pushed the Lancers to a 15-7 lead forcing a Wolfpack timeout. Heather Park hit a three pointer (her first of three) & was 2-2 on free throws while Muller also connected on her first of three shots from beyond the arc in that stretch. Coming out of the timeout Great Oak's Sami Bollinger converted an offensive rebound/putback into points bringing the Wolfpack within 15-9 with 4:40 to intermission. Then consecutive baskets by Waltz & Victoria Farris pulled Great Oak within four points at 17-13 at about a minute to go. Orange Lutheran closed out first half scoring with two straight baskets including one from Park as zeros went across the scoreboard restoring an eight point lead at 21-13 after sixteen minutes.

Just 35 seconds into third quarter action Park connected on a deep three which gave the Lancers their then largest lead of 11 points at 24-13. Waltz & Michelle Stanfill had layups keeping the Wolfpack within ten points at 26-16 & 28-18 respectively with three minutes left. Delaney Maguire's runner with 2:40 left plus another Muller three pointer gave Orange Lutheran a 33-18 lead (their largest lead of the day) with 2:21 left in the quarter. Kaitlyn Stufft's short elbow jumper pulled the Wolfpack within 13 points at 33-20 but a layup from Park restored a

fifteen point lead at 35-20. Muller then connected on her final three pointer of the game giving the Lancers a 38-21 lead after twenty four minutes.

Orange Lutheran's final basket of the day was a layup from Khanthaphixay with 3:10 to go giving them a 43-24 lead in fourth quarter action. Potter's three pointer at the buzzer made it a ten point margin of victory for Orange Lutheran at 43-33. It was the Wolfpack's only conversion from three point range.

Lancers coach Tom Howard spoke afterward saying "We were a little loose with the ball in stretches but when we were confident and able to run offense I liked what I saw. That layup from Park just before the half was huge and I couldn't have asked for anything better from an execution standpoint. They recognized the situation and ran their offense perfectly in that spot. Great Oak deserves a lot of credit for the way they play defense and getting us out of rhythm early. Their pressure makes you play quick and make mistakes."

Heather Park had 17 points including three makes from beyond the arc to lead Orange Lutheran's effort on Thursday. About the 8-0 run starting that second quarter she remarked "That was huge for us. It gave us separation & some confidence to hit some shots out here against a very good defense. I'm so excited to get to play at Home for the first time in postseason on Saturday night."

Wolfpack coach Sadiki Ellis remarked after the loss "We're a very good team who just didn't play well tonight. When that happens in the playoffs this is the outcome. I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish with such a young group and excited to see what the future holds."

Notable Lancers:

Heather Park 17 pts (3 makes from beyond the Arc)
Caitlin Muller 11 pts (3 makes from beyond the Arc)

Great Oak Notables:

Ashley Waltz 15 pts