

Jan. 17 Girls Basketball

Big night for past and present as 'Stars win second and Kelly wins first

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Jan. 17: Welcome to the winner's circle, coach Lauren Kelly.

And welcome back, Nottingham High girls' basketball team.

The Northstars won for the first time since opening day, taking a 50-45 victory over visiting Hightstown tonight to snap an eight-game losing streak.



Imani Alston (foreground) and Kelsey Ignace (background) both stepped their games up Tuesday night to help Nottingham defeat Hightstown and give Lauren Kelly her first varsity victory as a head coach (Photo by Wes "The Media Mogul" Kirkpatrick).

It was also the first win for new head coach Lauren Kelly, who took over four games ago. Kelly had plenty of victories as a Northstar player, but this was her first as the head honcho.

When asked if she felt relief or happiness, the rookie mentor opted for both sides of that emotional coin.

"Honestly, right now it's a little of both," Kelly said. "I'm really happy for the girls because it's been a long time since they've had this feeling. It was a rough stretch with all the turmoil going on within the team.

"I'm relieved personally a little bit. But I'm also happy that we're able to get another one. They work so hard in practice, they deserve it. It feels great."

Nottingham (2-8) was led by its captains, as Imani Alston exploded for 21 and Dalia Lopez added 15. Kelsey Ignace chipped in with eight.

"The three of them were just unbelievable," Kelly said. "They really just stepped up."

Hightstown (4-8) jumped to a six-point lead in the first quarter that Nottingham whittled down to 11-9. The Northstars tied it by halftime and went ahead for good in the third quarter.

Carrying 33-30 advantage into the final eight minutes, Nottingham

never let Hightstown tie or take the lead.

"The girls just played with such composure," Kelly said. "We switched up our defense in the second half and they did a great job of executing everything we asked them to. We didn't fold under

the pressure when they tested us.”

The reward Nottingham gets for their triumph is an all-expense paid trip to Trenton.

When told that should be an easy one, Kelly laughed.

“Yeah,” she said. “I’m not even worried about it.”

Turning serious (yes folks, she was kidding), Kelly said she told her team to enjoy the win for one night and get back to work tomorrow.

But one thing she hopes stays intact, is the confidence the ‘Stars hopefully gained from the win.

“It definitely showed we have what it takes to compete in a game situation,” she said. “It wasn’t a blowout either way. They were able to manage the game and compete down to the wire. It was definitely a confidence builder.”

And definitely a welcome reward for all involved.

Steinert slide continues after cold-shooting night in Lawrence

It was easy to see this one upset Bryan Rogers.

Not just from the frown on his face for much of the game, but due to the fact he kept his Steinert team in the lockerroom long after the Lawrence High gym had cleared out. The post-game chats are usually a few minutes and done with Rogers.

But that’s what happens during losing streaks, and the Spartans dropped their fourth straight with a sloppy 41-31 setback to the Cardinals.

Steinert shot just 12-for-48 (25 percent), committed 19 turnovers and were outrebounded 42-32. The Spartans never led, and the game’s only tie was 2-2.

Lindsay Usarzewicz had 10 points, all in the second half, but had a cold-shooting night. Kaitlyn Wolfsgruber was a bright spot with six points off the bench and Ashley Gonzalez and Gabi Bennett (who got her first varsity start) combined for 17 rebounds but none of that was enough.

Steinert trailed 9-2 after one, 17-12 at halftime and 26-21 after three. The Spartans (4-5) cut it to 28-25 on a Wolfsgruber bucket and two Bennett free throws.

Lawrence then missed three straight foul shots but Steinert couldn’t capitalize and Tatiana Hewitt’s steal and layup made it 30-25.

Usarzewicz answered with a 3-pointer, Marisa Visco hit a bucket for the Cards and Mackenzie Ewell hit a shot to make it 32-30 with 4:00 left.

But the Spartans would go 3:40 without scoring and just got one point for the rest of the game as the Cardinals (4-6) pulled away for their third straight victory.

Hornets snap losing streak with win over Princeton

Like Nottingham, Hamilton had not won since opening day.

Like Nottingham, the Hornets changed that tonight by taking a 55-35 home victory over winless Princeton (0-8). West was still without injured Alexis Johnson, but had no trouble with the Little Tigers.

The Hornets jumped to a 14-3 lead after one quarter and continued to build upon it in improving to 2-9. No other details were available.