

Jan. 24 Girls Basketball

Johnson becomes West's all-time scoring leader in leading Hornets to win

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Jan. 24: Alexis Johnson is back.

And at the top of the record book.

The Hamilton West senior forward broke a mark that had stood for 23 years today when she scored 34 points to become the school's all-time leading scorer in basketball for both boys and girls.

Needing 30 entering the game, Johnson drove the lane and was fouled while making the lay-up. She drained the free throw for her 30th point with 2:55 remaining to give Hamilton a 49-40 lead.

The game was stopped for a presentation of a plaque and the ball, and the Hornets held on for their third win of the season and second since Johnson returned three games ago from a sprained left knee.

"I'm feeling good," said Johnson, who has yet to start a game since her return. "The knee's just a little sore but I'm working through it."

Johnson hurt the knee in the first half during an ESCIT consolation game with Steinert on Dec. 30. She missed five games, and the Hornets lost every one as she looked on helplessly.

"It had a lot of fluid on it," Johnson said. "It was very frustrating. I just kept riding a bike, trying to get it better. I was practicing, but very lightly."

She played sparingly in last Tuesday's win at Princeton but scored 20 off the bench against Ewing Friday.

After making just two first-period foul shots today, Alexis looked like vintage Johnson by scoring 11, 11 and 10 in each of the next three quarters. She also finished with 12 rebounds and two blocked shots.

"Yeah, she's back," coach Karla Peroni said. "It's still a little tender. We were cautious about yesterday at practice, she said it was a little sore after Ewing's game. But she came out and did her thing today."

Johnson was already the all-time girls' record holder, and only two boys stood in front of her entering the game. She passed 2006 graduate Najee Lane, who had 1,415 points, then tracked down 1989 grad Brian Boone (1,423).

She became the second township girl to become her school's all-time scorer within the last four years, as Arielle Collins did so for Steinert in 2008.

"I'm very happy for her, I'm proud of her," Peroni said. "She puts the work in and she reaps the reward."

Johnson now has 1,428 points and stands at the head of list at a school that has been around for 82 years.

"It feels good," she said. "I never thought I would do this. I never thought it would happen."

"She knew she was close but we weren't giving her a number, especially with her injury," Peroni said. "I didn't want to put more pressure on her to do more."

Johnson was finally told she needed nine during a third-quarter timeout and, after draining a 3-pointer, she missed five straight shots before getting back in the groove.

"I started missing shots, I got nervous," she admitted.

But those nerves got pushed aside in the fourth quarter as Johnson led the Hornets to a much needed victory.

While her record was a big story, just as big from a team standpoint is that Hamilton rallied from an 18-2 first-quarter deficit to win the game.

“We told them it took a lot of heart,” Peroni said. “We’ve had games like that where we’re down and out and just go through the motions.

“But they really banded together. When we told the team Alexis was close, we jelled together and came through.”

Hamilton whittled the deficit to 21-20 by halftime and used a 7-0 run in the third quarter to go up 34-28. The Hornets would never trail again, as they won for the second time in three games to improve to 3-10 while snapping a four-game win streak by Lawrence (5-7).

“It feels good to get the win,” Johnson said. “We’re all working hard as a team and we just have to stay focused and get a winning streak.”

Hamilton won without any contribution from Erin Septer, who played about six minutes total before fouling out. Septer was Hamilton’s most reliable scorer during Johnson’s absence.

“The girls have started to form a lot of chemistry together,” Peroni said. “Erin Septer and Courtney Adams were phenomenal when Lex was down and out. They stepped up and carried the team.

“Unfortunately for Erin it was a rough game and it just didn’t go her way today. But it’s nice to have that trio back. Erin stepped up her game, Courtney stepped up her game, she’s going through the lane a lot.”

Adams played a big role in the win with eight points and eight rebounds, but it was Johnson who showed she might be back to her dominating self.

“I didn’t feel right the last game,” she said. “But I feel good now. I iced it before the game and the pain’s not as bad as it was before. It’s just a little sore on the bone, but I’m working through it.”

“I think two more days of practice will be good for her,” Peroni said. “I think she’ll be ready to go on Friday.”

And she will do so as the greatest scorer Hamilton West has ever produced.

Spartans use balanced attack to win third straight game

Whatever was bothering Steinert just a week ago doesn’t seem to be bothering it now.

The Spartans have followed a four-game losing streak with a three-game winning streak after taking a 46-40 home win over West Windsor-Plainsboro North today.

Lindsay Usarzewicz led the attack with 14 points, while Mackenzie Ewell had 13 and Lauren Matrisciano chipped in with 10.

The Spartans took a 14-7 lead in the first quarter and held off the Northern Knights (5-7) for the rest of the way.

Nottingham takes Robbinsville to the limit before falling

Robbinsville has one of the most improved teams in the CVC this year and Nottingham took the Ravens to the limit before falling, 51-29, to drop to 2-10.

In a game that was tight throughout, the Northstars trailed by one after the first quarter, by two at halftime and by three after three quarters.

Imani Alston led the Northstars attack with 17 points, while Annisa Holman tallied 13 and Dalia

Lopez chipped in with eight.

“They played really well,” coach Lauren Kelly said. “They are getting better and better every game. We were just lacking that close game experience tonight - we couldn't put it away. It was a heartbreaker.”