



Miller's time: sophomore, junior leads Cubs to win and force tie-breaker for Little 4 title

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MIRANDA -- Senior night highlighted the South Fork High girls basketball team upperclassmen, but it would be a pair of underclassmen who stole the spotlight.

Breanna Miller's and Taylor Neill's 15-point efforts sparked a Cubs fourth-quarter rally that allowed the team to erase Hoopa's 12-point lead and come out with a scintillating 55-50 victory Thursday night.

The win also creates quite a situation as both teams evened their Little 4 League records at 4-2. The two teams will meet once again on Saturday in an out-of-bracket tie-breaker to determine the league champion.

The time for the contest is still in discussion as South Fork Athletic Director Ann Constantino set a tentative 2 p.m. tip-off while Humboldt-Del Norte commissioner Charlie Lakin stated a 7 p.m. start.

But the matchup that created the situation cannot be ignored.

With the seniors honored before the contest and the league title up for grabs, Miller, a sophomore, made her impact felt.

"It makes me feels so good to fulfill their year," said Miller about what her performance meant for the

seniors. "I'm happy that I could help."

Miller found herself in the right place at the right time on numerous occasions as she grabbed key rebounds for important put-back buckets.

But her offensive outbreak was ignited by Neill.

"It was Taylor," South Fork head coach Lin Jackson said. "She gave us confidence and it's like a disease and (the players) caught it. She was the key to the game."

Trailing 29-20 after halftime, the Cubs watched Kin-sin-tah Joseph (she finished with 11 points) and Winter Nelson (15 points) put on a show. The pair, along with Sara Chase (12 points) and tall Sara Lewis (had numerous rebounds without even jumping) boosted the Warriors to a 40-28 advantage.

The situation forced Jackson to call a timeout which appeared futile with Hoopa on fire.

Futile it wasn't.

Neill provided an ample extinguisher, dropping a pair of 3-pointers from the corner and at the end of three quarters, the score was 42-36.

"I never shoot outside," Neill said. "I only thought I could make them inside. I took a chance."

Joseph and company tried their best to hold off the South Fork advance but Miller and crew weren't about to let that happen.

South Fork attacked the basket without mercy creating and-one attempts and while the Cubs struggled to convert free-throws, the furious pace deflated Hoopa.

Using both long and intermediate passes, the Cubs

spread the Warriors' defense and Miller was the one to put the ball in the basket.

Breaking away consistently from Hoopa defenders, Miller was on the receiving end of a Neill assist for a bucket giving South Fork a 49-46 lead that set the home crowd ablaze.

”She stepped it up and played outstanding,” Neill said of Miller. “She played like she's the same age as any of us.”

Hoopa did create a tense moment by cutting the lead to 51-50 with 1:27 left.

But missed shots and the inability to stabilize their wild offense hurt their chances and forced the team to foul.

And it was only fitting that the player sent to the line was a senior, Taylor's sister, Brittainy.

The older Neill drained four free throws to ice the game.

The contest provided a nice turnaround for South Fork as they started 3-0 in league before dropping to 3-2. According to Jackson, the drop-off was due to injuries but finally having a complete roster allowed the Cubs to showcase their true talent.

South Fork will need another complete performance Saturday if they want to accomplish Jackson's goal.

”Hopefully we can outright win the title on Saturday,” the coach said.