

Rodriguez drops 24 as Eastern leads wire to wire

By MICHAEL LETENDRE
STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL – The one thing for certain when the Bristol Eastern boys basketball team has to tangle with Bulkeley of Hartford, the game is always an epic challenge.

Boys basketball

And on Tuesday, Jan. 17, the encounter between the two schools was no different.

But in this one, Eastern led from wire to wire as Eli Rodriguez dropped in 24 big points to lead all scorers as the Lancers picked up an impressive 55-45 CCC South victory from the Thomas M. Monahan Gymnasium in Bristol.

The win moved Eastern to 7-3 on the season – one game away from playoff qualification – while the Bulldogs fell to 6-4 overall.

Eastern used a zone defense to near perfection as Bulkeley shot 23.5-percent from the field in the first half which dropped to 7-of-35 in the second for a 20-percent clip.

The Bulldogs missed 13 of 14 three-pointers through the first three periods of play and shot 22-percent overall on the evening.

“They’re such a good penetrating team,” said Eastern coach Mike Giovinazzo. “We tried man-to-man early in the game and I didn’t think we could stay with them for four quarters off the dribble so

we had to go to zone. And when you have a guy like (Kris) Fuller in the middle, you can play zone. You can take some chances on the perimeter and you know he’s in the middle.”

“It worked out well.”

The Lancers matched Bulkeley’s physical play throughout the game as Fuller and Ryan Chiasson combined to nearly scoop in nearly 30 rebounds while the Bulldogs misses really began to pile up.

“They’ve been doing it all year and every time you tell them that they have to step up and play physical, they do it even better than the time before,” said Giovinazzo of Fuller and Chiasson. “Right now, they’re certain things on this team we know we’re going to get and what we’re getting from them is keeping us in every game.”

“You won’t get beat when you rebound like that.”

Fuller, for the second time in three games, just missed a triple-double but had the best rebounding night of his career.

The 6-foot-8 center scored 10 points, nabbed a career best 20 rebounds while picking up a career high of eight blocked shots.

Like a Hoover vacuum, Fuller cleaned up.

“I knew I had to go hard this game,” said Fuller. “And when they were coming to the glass all the time, I had to box them out and whenever they came to my area, I’d just showed them who was boss.”

Chiasson had one of his

BRISTOL EASTERN 55, BULKELEY 45
from the Thomas M. Monahan Gymnasium, Bristol
Bulkeley (6-4) 11 9 6 19 – 45
Bristol Eastern (7-3) 17 14 9 15 – 55
BULKELEY (45): Qunito Mapp 1-1-3, Jon Wilson 7-6-21, P.J. Williams 4-4-13, Rodney McBride 1-0-2, Anthony Butler 1-0-2, Rashad Miller 0-2-2, Jamel Glenn 0-0-0, Sam Weston 1-0-2. **Totals: 15-13-45.**
BRISTOL EASTERN (55): Greg Taylor 1-0-2, Jeff Farber 0-0-0, Eli Rodriguez 8-6-24, Joel Angeles 0-0-0, Ryan Chiasson 4-2-10, Gabe Ungaro 1-0-2, Jose Antonetty 3-0-7, Kris Fuller 3-4-10. **Totals: 20-12-55.**
Three-pointers: Bulkeley 2-17 (Wilson, Williams); Bristol Eastern 3-7 (Antonetty 1-2, Rodriguez 2-4, Ungaro 0-1).
Rebounds: Bulkeley 42; Bristol Eastern 44 (Fuller 20).
Assists: Bulkeley 8; Bristol Eastern 12 (Chiasson, Rodriguez 3).
Blocks: Bulkeley 4; Bristol Eastern 9 (Fuller 8).
Steals: Bulkeley 14; Bristol Eastern 8 (Rodriguez 4).
Turnovers: Bulkeley 15; Bristol Eastern 20.
Records: Bristol Eastern 7-3 overall, 4-2 CCC South; Bulkeley 6-4 overall
Stat of the Game: Bulkeley was content to heave up outside shots and not drive into the paint, leading to a sub-par shooting performance at 21.7-percent for the game.

best games in a Lancers’ uniform with nine points, a career high of 10 rebounds and three assists.

He simply used superior or inside positioning to cut off Bulkeley defenders and grabbed a tough couple of offensive rebounds.

The duo of Fuller and Chiasson stayed out of foul trouble, played a tough brand of defense and simply made Bulkeley pay with those several missed shooting opportunities.

“Every shot, we just tried to box them out because they flew to the glass hard,” said Chiasson. “We did a pretty decent job at that.”

Jon Wilson pumped in 21 points for Bulkeley and had several steals and lay-ups to keep the visitors hanging around.

P.J. Williams added 13 points but a late technical foul on the guard put the game out of reach for the Bulldogs.

Players like Bulldogs’

center Qunito Mapp (three points) had trouble operating in the lane as Fuller blocked shot after shot and when he wasn’t rejecting attempts, the Eastern center altered another dozen or so. Those alterations helped to keep Mapp out of the paint and out of his comfort zone.

The game was a back and forth affair early but off a three-pointer by Wilson, the visitors were only down 10-9 with 2:14 left in the first stanza.

But off a 7-2 Eastern jaunt – highlighted by five points from Rodriguez – the Lancers led 17-11 after one frame of play.

Bulkeley cut the deficit to 19-16 with 6:22 left before the half but off back-to-back three’s by Jose Antonetty (seven points, two assists) and Rodriguez – along with another offensive rebound put-back by the crafty Rodriguez – the Lancers led 27-16 with 3:52 left.

Bulkeley hit for four straight points. But off an Antonetty jumper and a baseline lay-up from Chiasson, the Eastern advantage was 31-20 at the half.

Bulkeley strangely went to a slowdown game in the third period but the results proved to be disastrous as the Lancers allowed the visitors only six points in the frame as the Lancers opened up a 40-26 edge with eight minutes left to play.

“I’d like to say that it was our zone but I think it was just more the pace they were playing at,” said Giovinazzo of Bulkeley’s change of pace in the third quarter.

The teams battled back and forth to start the final frame of play but off two free throws by Rodriguez, the Lancers were set up at 44-31 with 5:42 remaining.

Bulkeley made a late run at it and off an 8-0 burst – capped by a steal and lay-up from Wilson – got the visitors within five at 44-39 with 2:36 left.

Off a Fuller lay-up that made it a 46-39 contest with 2:19 remaining, Bulkeley went on a quick 5-1 run as two free throws by Wilson cut the deficit to 47-44 with 61 seconds left in regulation.

But off Wilson’s last free throw make, Fuller threw a three-quarter court pass to a streaking Rodriguez as his lay-up made it 49-44 with 58 seconds left.

Seconds later, Greg Taylor made a critical steal and off a free throw by

Chiasson, Eastern led 50-44 with 35.6 seconds showing on the clock.

Quickly after the Chiasson charity toss, Williams picked up a technical foul off a scrum, Rodriguez made three of four free throws and with 25.9 seconds remaining in the game, Eastern led comfortably at 53-44.

Fuller ended things with two free throws as the Lancers eventually held on to the ten point victory.

“It’s a huge win,” said Giovinazzo of beating Bulkeley. “They have a good record, they only lost to good teams and they’re extremely athletic. They have a lot of weapons and we answered everything they threw at us tonight.”

The win was a big one coming off a tough one-point loss to Maloney back on Jan. 14 when the Spartans defeated the Lancers 54-53 from Meriden.

Eastern has been bouncing back all season long.

“At practice, coach was telling us how to take that momentum from that game and bring it into this game,” said Fuller. “I think did that very well tonight.”

In the JV game, Eastern defeated Bulkeley 46-33 as Savion Wade had eight points while Gabe Ungaro unleashed seven points in the victorious effort.

Comments? Email mletendre@BristolObserver.com.

It wasn’t pretty but Lancers stifle Bulldogs, 41-13

By MICHAEL LETENDRE
STAFF WRITER

HARTFORD – There are some basketball games you’re going to win that will be ugly during the season while others will be complete gems.

Girls basketball

And the Lancers victory in Hartford against Bulkeley was not a gem in the least.

But Eastern is looking for bigger and better things right now and a win against the Bulldogs certainly goes a long way.

On a Tuesday, Jan. 17,

the Lancers smashed Bulkeley 41-13 in a CCC South encounter from the Babe Allen Fieldhouse.

With the win, Eastern evened its ledger at 6-6 while the Bulldogs fell to 0-12 on the campaign.

Mathematically, Bulkeley is still in the hunt for a spot in the state tournament picture but the squad would have to win out its final eight games.

The problem is that the Bulldogs haven’t scored more than 22 points in a contest this season and against Eastern, Bulkeley hit for just 13 first-half points.

However, it didn’t score a single point after halftime. The Lancers put 17

BRISTOL EASTERN 41, BULKELEY 13
from the Babe Allen Fieldhouse, Hartford
Bristol Eastern (6-6) 17 2 14 8 – 41
Bulkeley (0-12) 5 8 0 0 – 13
BRISTOL EASTERN (41): Mallory Kloss 2-2-6, Kadajah Shultz 3-3-9, Christina Tramontanis 2-0-4, Sonja Stokes 1-0-2, Nikki Hammer 1-0-2, Amanda Zdun 2-1-5, Karissa Smith 2-1-5, Chantel Defosse 4-0-8. **Totals 17-7-41.**
BULKELEY (13): Kenya Anselme 3-0-6, Amanda Pica 3-0-7, Shakaria Matthews 0-0-0, Kassandra Lockhart 0-0-0, Kiynee Williams 0-0-0. **Totals 6-0-13.**
Three-point goals: Pica (Bulkeley).
Records: Bristol Eastern 6-6; Bulkeley 0-12.

points on the board in the first frame and simply never looked back.

After only one period of play, Eastern held a 17-5 push but then the offense went quiet over the next eight minutes for the visitors.

Bulkeley outscored the Lancers 8-2 in the second frame but Eastern still held a 19-13 edge at intermission.

From there, the Bulkeley offense fell apart.

Eastern scored 14 points in the third stanza

and added another eight in the final period of play to zip up a 41-13 victory from Hartford.

No one from Eastern hit for double figures but several players had quality games.

Kadajah Shultz led all players with nine points while Chantel Defosse netted a season high eight in the victorious effort.

Mallory Kloss added six points, Karissa Smith tallied five while Amanda Zdun also scored five as well.

Christina Tramontanis had four while Sonja Stokes and Nikki Hammer each scored a bucket.

Amanda Pica led Bulkeley with seven points while Kenya Anselme tossed in six.

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