

Chemistry clicks as girls make statement with 17-point victory

Written by Deb Egenberger

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After his girls scored only two points in the first quarter against Centura on Saturday, Swede basketball coach Chris Lecher thought he might be in for another long game.

Gothenburg was 0-for-6 shooting in the first eight minutes, putting only a pair of free throws from junior Regan Geiken on the board and trailing 12-2 at the end of one quarter.

Then the light bulb went on.

“I can’t really explain it,” Lecher said of a noticeable turnaround. “I told the girls I still believed in them and they needed to believe in themselves.”

Somehow, some way, the switch was flipped and the Swedes clawed their way back into the game, eventually dominating the Centurians for a 61-44 victory.

“I think it was just a matter of them finally seeing things that have been there all season,” the coach said of his team. “We’ve had the open girls all along but too often the girl with the ball at the time didn’t see it.”

Gothenburg’s comeback didn’t happen all at once.

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The girls made steady progress through the second period, closing the gap to a 21-19 deficit at halftime.

Lecher said he implemented a little more motion in the offense but really hadn't changed much of the game plan from the first 11 games of the season.

The Swedes started the second half strong with an 8-0 run before Centura got on the board with a three-pointer at the 3:32 mark.

With seven points in the third quarter by senior Brittyn Munster and six from classmate Jacey Wiggins, the Swedes built a 40-29 advantage that kept Centura's girls frustrated.



In the fourth quarter, that aggravation translated into fouls that sent the Swedes to the free throw line 18 times in the period.

Four Centura players fouled out as the Swedes made 11 free throws in the frame and finished 22-of-35 for the game.

"We're shooting free throws well right now," Lecher said. "When you win by 17 points and go 22-of-35 from the line, that's huge."

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Also making a big impact was double-digit scoring from three players. Geiken finished with a game-high 19 points, 10 of which came in the fourth quarter, along with 11 rebounds.

Munster added 16 and Wiggins chipped in 13.

“We had been having only one girl in double figures,” Lecher said. “I keep telling the girls if we could get more consistent scoring out of more than one girl, that makes us difficult to defend and we’d win some ball games.”

The Swedes, now 4-8 on the season, are in the midst of a grueling stretch of five games in eight days.

They will finish off the tough run hosting Chase County on Friday after having traveled to Cozad Thursday evening.

Lecher said Cozad (3-7) is an improved team and the Haymakers always give Gothenburg their best game.

At 3-9, Chase County has struggled but always gives good effort.

“We have to maintain our confidence and believe in our team,” Lecher said. “If we keep the momentum going, we’ve got a definite shot at winning every game. We just have to put together a full four quarters of basketball.”

Thursday’s varsity game at Cozad is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. with Friday’s home contest at 6 p.m.