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By JASON EPP

Leader & Times

BEAVER, Okla.—An 11-0 run in the second half of the first quarter by the Southwestern Heights Mustangs proved to be the only big run of the game, and enough to put Heights over the top against Beaver, 59-54.

“They were more athletic and more physical than us,” Mustangs coach Craig Schlessman said. “I’m not sure there was much more we could have done. I think our effort is there but we need to be more patient with our shots. We got in too much of a rush too much of the time.”

The game started at a frantic pace with both teams running the floor well. Beaver was almost flawless at the start, scoring on nearly every possession as they built a 15-9 lead in the first four minutes.

But Heights ran off eleven straight points over the next two minutes, including nine point by

Nathan Johnsrud that included a pair of threes, that put Heights up 20-15.

The Mustangs led 22-19 at the end of the first quarter.

“That was our first game playing without (Cody) Jennings, and some of our sophomores stepped up and did a good job,” Mustangs coach Nefro Saucedo said. “Beaver's a tough team and it's a good game for us to see where we stand; to see if we're mentally tough or not.”

With Heights missing center Cody Jennings, the Dusters continued to push the ball inside to their post players, Garrett Weber and Jorge Rivera and tied the game at 25 with 6:02 left in the half. Beaver took the lead with Weber's next basket with 5:11 left in the half.

In the second quarter alone, there were five ties and two lead changes, and the game was knotted at 33 at half.

Rivera had 10 points by half and Weber 14. Johnsrud had 11 for Heights, but had been shut out in the second quarter. Jorge Dela Torre had added nine at that point for the Mustangs.

“Our big key was Weber, and we rotated several guys on him to try and wear him down, and there for a while we still couldn't stop him,” Saucedo said. “But I think in eventually paid off with fatigue. He still had a great game.”

The back-and-forth play continued at the start of the second half with several lead changes. Heights began to assert themselves at the defensive end midway through the third, only allowing one Beaver basket over the final four minutes to take a 45-42 lead.

Beaver hurt themselves during that stretch, missing six straight free throws.

Beaver again battled back, and took a 49-48 lead with 5:21 left. Heights scored the next six to push the lead back to five (53-48) with 3:27 left.

A pair of Rivera free throws and a Weber basket cut the Mustangs' lead back to one again with 2:38 left.

With Heights leading 55-52, Rivera stepped in front of a perimeter pass and laid it in to make it a one point game with 37 second left. Beaver then fouled Edwin Martinez and sent him to the line. Martinez answered by hitting both. Johnsrud hit the front end of a pair of one-and-ones and the Mustangs pulled out the win.

“We need to play a style of offense that is more disciplined, where we work to get better shots, and they took us out of that,” Schessman said. “But their defense played a role in that and dictated some of that pace.”

Nathan Johnsrud led the Mustangs with 21 points on 7 of 16 shooting. Jorge Dela Torre added 15 on 6 of 21 shooting. Alexis Loya was 5 fo 8 from the field for 10 points.

For Beaver it was Garrett Weber with 23 on 10 of 15 shooting from the field. Jorge Rivera added 16 on 6 of 9 shooting.

Beaver (13-9) will host Hooker (5-13 tonight. Heights (10-6) will host South Gray Friday.

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