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SPORTS

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Bartlett duo sinks St. Charles East

By: John Lemon



St. Charles East's Olivia Kiefer, front, battles Bartlett's Kylie Walker in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



Bartlett's Alexis Sinclair moves with the ball in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles East Monday night.



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St. Charles East's Emma Yakey, left, battles Bartlett's Kylie Walker for the ball in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



St. Charles East's Olivia Kiefer, left, defends as Bartlett's Danielle Hedeem takes a shot in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



Bartlett's Mackenzie Hare reaches for a rebound in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles East Monday night.



St. Charles East's Gabby Schmidt soars under the hoop against Bartlett in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



St. Charles East's Leah Griffin, left, advances with the ball as Bartlett's Danielle Hedeem reaches in for a swipe in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



St. Charles East's Gabby Schmidt, front, keeps the ball from Bartlett's Alexis Sinclair in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



St. Charles East's Olivia Kiefer looks to the hoop against Bartlett in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



St. Charles East's Makenna Brown moves the ball past Bartlett's Trinity Reyes in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.



St. Charles East's Leah Griffin shoots against Bartlett in varsity girls basketball at St. Charles Monday night.

Bartlett got its big week started with a bang Monday night at St. Charles East.

The Hawks head to South Elgin on Friday night in a battle of Upstate Eight Conference unbeatens. The Hawks tuned up for it Monday with a 56-37 nonconference victory.

Sophomore Mackenzie Hare and junior Lexie Sinclair combined for 45 of the team's 56 points. The duo scored all 21 of the Hawks' second half points until coach Joseph Eirich pulled them with a little over five minutes remaining and his team up 50-28.

"When we play loose and free, that's the kind of team we are," Eirich said. "When we clamp up and worry about our opponent, that's when we struggle. Today was the first time in a long time that we all played relaxed."

It took only 41 seconds for Saints coach Aubree Schuett to call timeout after Hare hit back-to-back 3s from nearly the same spot on the wing to open the game.

Shortly after the timeout Sinclair drained a 3 to make it 9-0, and the Hawks were never threatened the rest of the night leading 29-14 at halftime and 43-25 after three quarters.

"We knew exactly what they were going to do," Saints assistant coach Jeff Lawrence said. "We practiced against it. But you have to take your hat off to those two kids. Not only can they play but they play well with each other, they complement each other. They have excellent basketball IQs."

Hare scored a game-high 24 points and Sinclair added 21. Both hit three 3-pointers and grabbed 6 rebounds for Bartlett (13-7), who plays Elgin on Tuesday before the showdown for the Upstate Eight lead Friday.

"That's a game you have to be prepared and ready to play and I think we are definitely ready for that game," Sinclair said. "It will be a fun one."

Trailing 31-14 after Sinclair opened the second half with a steal and layup, St. Charles East (6-13) made a brief 6-0 run on Emma Yakey's 3-pointer, a driving basket from Leah Griffin and Olivia Kiefer's free throw to get within 31-20, and Kiefer's 3 moments later made it 33-23.

But the Hawks ended the quarter with a 10-2 surge that included a pair of Sinclair 3s to push their lead back to 18.

Kiefer paced the Saints with 13 points. She hit a 3 late in the fourth quarter to start a 9-0 surge that included a pair of Vivian DiGiovanni free throws, an inside score from Cali Papez and Makenna Brown's layup.

"We have a tendency to let the game get ahead of us a little," Lawrence said. "We need to understand the situation and when we need to attack, when we need to slow it down, when we need to get the ball in the hands of the right people. Some of what happens out there is a result of youth but we are going to have to stop using that shortly."