

McDonald makes the difference

By CHRIS JAMES - editorial@nwherald.com

JOHNSBURG - It was going to come down to one play.

And Johnsburg girls basketball player Michelle McDonald made the play.

McDonald's steal with 3.1 seconds left and layup at the buzzer Tuesday night helped the Skyhawks beat Huntley, 37-35, in a thrilling Fox Valley Conference Fox Division game.

The win leaves Johnsburg (21-4 overall, 5-1 FVC Fox) in a first-place tie with Grayslake Central on top of the division. The Red Raiders (21-3, 5-2) fell a half-game out of first.

"It was surreal," McDonald said of the final seconds.

The junior center, who was playing in her third game back after missing a month with a foot injury, wasn't sure she had won the game. She thought she had sent it into overtime.

"I wasn't sure. I was like 'Oh, yeah, we're going to keep playing.' Then everyone [rushed me] and I was like, 'Wow.' "

Huntley had the ball with seconds remaining at halfcourt and was trying to set up a potential game-winning shot. Heidi Reeves tried to get an inbounds pass to Meaghan Staley-Gamble just above the free-throw line.

McDonald, who had a running start, stepped in front of the pass and drove uncontested for the winning layup. She was mobbed by her teammates and the entire Johnsburg student section in just about the same amount of time it took McDonald to drive for the winning basket.

McDonald said she was watching Reeves and made a quick break on the ball. The difficult part of the play for Reeves was that she had to try and throw the pass over 6-foot-1 Paige Fiedorowicz. After the steal, McDonald was not sure she was going to make to the basket before time ran out.

"I just wanted it, and it was just adrenaline I was going on," McDonald said.

Both teams turned in defensive efforts that made their coaches proud. The leading scorers for both teams had 10 points.

Fiedorowicz, who had 32 in the team's first meeting, finished with 10. McDonald also had 10.

Staley-Gamble scored 10 points, which put her at exactly 1,000 for her career, and grabbed seven rebounds.

Huntley swarmed Fiedorowicz, Jenny Turpel and McDonald every time they touched the ball.

The Skyhawks, likewise, were in the face of Staley-Gamble and Red Raiders sharpshooter Katie Bergquist every time they tried to make a move.

Bergquist, who had 24 points in Huntley's 63-61 win Jan. 13, finished with six points on two three-pointers.

Johnsburg led, 24-22, going into the fourth quarter, a period that included six lead changes and two ties.

The excitement began in the last 25 seconds after Johnsburg's Mallory Scharf buried her third three-pointer of the game to put the Skyhawks up, 34-32.

But with 14 seconds to go, Bergquist hit a three to put the Red Raiders ahead, 35-34.

The Skyhawks worked for the last shot and Scharf was fouled on layup attempt. A 92 percent free-throw shooter, Scharf made 1 of 2 to tie the game at 35-all with 5.1 seconds left.

Huntley called timeout at halfcourt with 3.1 to go before McDonald's heroics.

The game was delayed 45 minutes when the officials arrived late.

icon:johnsburg

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