

O'Neill leads Weber to more success

Sophomore nails key fourth-quarter shots to keep Warriors alive

By Amy Donaldson
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There was a time when Abbie O'Neill was afraid to take an open shot.

"The beginning of the season it was kind of hard to do," said the sophomore, who hit some huge shots for the Weber Warriors as they kept their playoff hopes alive with an upset of No. 5 ranked Davis, 46-45, Tuesday night. "But I was not very good."

Rather than simply let a more experienced teammate carry the load, however, O'Neill said she spent her Saturdays this winter fixing what wasn't working.

"Every Saturday, we have practice or shootaround, and I just shot and shot and shot," she said. "I set specific goals every week and just tried to work on those things."

The result has been a better shot and more confidence — things that are critical if the Warriors hope to make it to the 5A state tournament.

Before players like O'Neill, Hannah Charlton and Maren Ulrich started to play with confidence, the offensive load was carried by the team's only returning varsity starter — Dixie-bound Erin Reichle.



Erin Reichle takes the ball and hustles downcourt during Weber's Region 1 victory over Davis.

"It's so much easier when everyone steps up. I feel like it's just a confidence thing, and they've gotten stronger throughout the season."

- Erin Reichle

She was averaging nearly 20 points a game, but the Warriors were struggling to stay above .500. That's because all defenses had to do was slow Reichle and they could beat the Warriors.

That strategy doesn't work anymore.

"Davis tried a box-and-one (defense) on us, and then (Charlton) hit a three. And then we spread it out a little more and hit a layup. And then we're out of it," said coach Rick Stoeckl. "The other girls stepped

up, and that's what we need to do."

The problem at the beginning of the year — for many teams — is that when young players struggle, it can hurt their confidence. In turn, those inexperienced players are less willing to shoot — even if they're wide open. O'Neill admitted she felt badly when she missed.

"I'm pretty hard on myself," she said.

Continued on next page



TOP LEFT: Kandice Jensen tries to cut off a Davis player.



TOP RIGHT: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX battles for a loose ball.



LOWER MIDDLE: Haley Nelson gets off a shot near the basket.

GAME SUMMARY

Weber	11	13	8	14	- 46
Davis	11	14	5	15	- 45

WEBER (46) – Erin Reichle 5-17 11-13 23, Hannah Charlton 3-7 1-1 9, Maren Ulrich 2-6 0-0 4, Abbie O’Neill 3-3 2-2 8, Alyssa Potter 0-2 1-4 1, Hanna Buswell 0-2 1-1 1, Haley Nelson 0-0 0-0 0, Kandice Jensen 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 13-37 16-21 46.

DAVIS (45) – Jessica Richardson 6 6-8 18, Natalie Mecham 2 7-9 11, Morgan Hartvigson 3 0-0 8, Sarah Beecher 2 0-0 4, Caitlyn Gibson 0 2-3 2, Kayley Neilson 1 0-0 2, Emily Bott 0 0-0 0. Totals 13 16-20 45.

Total fouls: Weber 18, Davis 15.

Fouled out: Potter.

Three-point goals: Weber 3 (Charlton 2, Reichle), Davis 2 (Hartvigson 2).

Continued from previous page

But she and her teammates did something about it.

Reichle isn't just grateful the players around her worked hard and now take risks in games, she's proud of them.

"It's so much easier when everyone steps up," said Reichle, who led all scorers with 23 points. "I feel like it's just a confidence thing, and they've gotten stronger throughout the season."

She praised O'Neill's defensive efforts as much as her offensive help. The sophomore finished the game with eight points, but one of those was a layup that tied the game with 2:35 left in the fourth quarter. Then Reichle's 11-for-13 shooting from the free-throw line — with seven of those coming in the fourth quarter — sealed the win for the Warriors.

Charlton finished with nine points, while Reichle earned six steals. Ulrich had five rebounds,

while Hanna Buswell grabbed seven rebounds.

Davis led most of the first quarter until Reichle tied it up with a three-point shot just before time expired. Weber led most of the second quarter until Morgan Hartvigsen hit a trey just five seconds before halftime to give the Darts a 25-24 lead.

Points were tough to come by for both teams in the third quarter with Weber leading 32-30 heading into the fourth quarter.

Stoeckl said the fact that the Warriors led and managed to earn the victory after letting so many fourth-quarter leads slip away this season was reason to believe the team could accomplish its goal of winning the remaining region games on its schedule.

"We have to win to make the tournament," he said. "I'm as proud of this team as I've been of any team I've had."