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St. Charles E. runs by Batavia

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By John Lemon

St. Charles East played a game of catch me if you can Saturday night at Batavia, starting with an opening 20-point first quarter.

The Bulldogs tried, trimming a 21-point deficit to 6 in the fourth quarter, before St. Charles East rattled off one more run to close out a 61-48 victory.

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St. Charles East (4-3, 2-0) heads into a matchup with defending Upstate Eight River champion Geneva on Tuesday with momentum while Batavia fell to 4-4, 0-2.

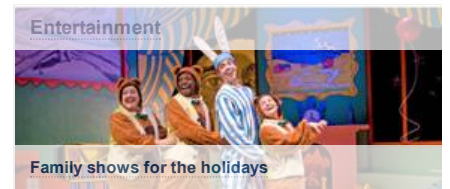
"We're not really like a stalling team," Saints point guard Amanda Hilton said of continuing their up-tempo attack even while Batavia rallied late. "We wanted to seal the win and keep playing our game and don't get frustrated."

Hilton and Paige Jordan got the Saints going early. After Anna Bartles posted up for a basket to put St. Charles East ahead to stay at 8-6, Hilton knocked down a 3-pointer.

Jordan also hit a 3, banking her shot in to beat the first-quarter buzzer and give her team a 20-13 lead. She kept going in the second quarter with a 3-pointer to send St. Charles East into the locker room ahead 34-18.

The Saints broke the game open with an 11-0 spurt that Jordan, Hilton and Morgan Vyzral provided all the scoring. Jordan (16 points) and Hilton (10) combined for 26 of those first-half points.

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"Paige was on fire today," Hilton said. "She drove well, shot well, hit some 3s, had an overall really good game."

Vyzral scored the Saints' first 2 baskets as they opened their biggest lead, 41-20.

Batavia sophomore center Erin Bayram, who had provided half of her team's offense at that point with 10 points, took a hard foul battling for an offensive rebound. She immediately started sobbing in obvious pain before being carried off the court by her coach Kevin Jensen and trainer Jay Sears.

A captain as a sophomore, Bayram will visit a doctor Monday to learn the extent of the injury to her left knee.

"She is a leader on our team, she is a mature individual in high school," Jensen said. "It does shake you up a little when you see her go down. The team wants to back her up. The girls really care about each other so they want to make sure everyone is all right."

Batavia outscored the Saints 25-10 after Bayram's injury to get as close as 51-45. Katie Ryan gave the Bulldogs a lift inside scoring 8 of her 10 points in the second half while battling for a game-high 8 rebounds.

"They started taking it to the basket and started to play better," Saints coach Lori Drumtra said. "I thought 42 (Ryan) really made a difference for them. She really started to hurt us. She's hard to stop close."

After Ryan's basket got the Bulldogs within 6 points with 4:42 left, Hilton broke Batavia's press and found Kyra Washington for a lay-in. Hilton then split Batavia's pressure again for a 3-point play and a 56-45 lead, and the Bulldogs never got closer.

The Saints finished shooting nearly 50 percent from the field at 24 of 50 to make up for an off-night at the line (10 of 20). Even that was better than Batavia struggling at 3 of 13 on free throws, while the Saints' overall play impressed Jensen.

"They just play with a lot of speed," Jensen said. "It was hard to slow down. Lori has them playing real well. Every time we felt we had the ball in our hands someone slapped the ball away. They played exceptionally hard and exceptionally fast and we had a hard time matching that."

Hilton led all scorers with 21 points, Jordan added 18 and Vyzral 11. Kaytlin St. Clair added 9 and Liza Fruendt 8 for Batavia.

"The first half was a nice half for us," Drumtra said. "We have been really working on coming out strong and playing with a sense of urgency rather than getting that sense of urgency when we are down by 5 or 10 points."

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