

By Randy Whalen

Jalen Falcon was being asked about scoring a game-high 24 points in the third-place game of the WJOL Tournament when Lockport Township boys basketball coach Brett Hespell interjected.

"You also had a team-high four turnovers," Hespell reminded him.

Falcon agreed and added that "each of those turnovers should take away two points." But the interaction illustrates something else, there is certainly potential on this season's Porters team. But it always has to strive to be its best.

"Jalen had a great tournament, he averaged 19.5 points per game and doing a great job," Hespell said of Falcon, who shot 11-of-15 from the field in the third-place game and made the All-Tournament Team. "Our starts to games so far this season have been a mixed bag though. We've been up-and-down, up-and-down. We have to sustain a little better but we will learn as we go."

In the 49-41 victory over Bradley-Bourbonnais in the third-place game, Lockport got off to a good start, racing out to a 17-5 lead and settling for a 17-7 advantage after the first quarter. Falcon, who is a junior guard, was 4-of-4 from the field in the quarter and scored eight of his points.

But the Porters were limited to four points in the second quarter and led 21-18 at halftime.

"I've got to get that way better," Falcon said of his turnovers. "We still have to get our connection back. We lost some seniors from last year's team. But we're getting that bond back and I love playing with these guys. I love them like brothers."

He also loves playing basketball. Falcon is a multisport athlete, who was a wide receiver defensive back this fall in football and made it to state in the long jump during track and field season this past spring.

"My favorite sport is basketball," smiled Falcon when asked what was the top one for him. "I've been playing it since the fifth grade and I just love it. I love playing ball with the guys."

The Boilermakers (2-2) forged ahead 28-27 midway in the third before Lockport regained the lead and closed the quarter on a 9-0 run to lead 36-28 heading into the fourth quarter. The Porters, who made 10-of-14 free throws in the game, maintained at least a two-possession advantage throughout the fourth quarter.

Senior guard Adam Labuda contributed six points and eight boards for Lockport. Junior guards Evan Dziadkowiec and Trevale Williams (6 rebounds) each scored five points and senior post player Hyatt Timosciek, who is back playing hoops after taking last season off from the game, added four points for the Porters, who shot 19-of-43 from the field, including 1-of-4 on three-pointers, and held a 31-26 rebounding advantage.

Anthony Kemp, a junior swing player, had a team-high 14 points and contributed six rebounds for Bradley-Bourbonnais. Junior guard Tyran Bender added nine points for the Boilermakers, who shot 15-of-44 from the field, including 1-of-18 from beyond the arc, and were 10-of-15 from the line.

Lemont won the tournament title, its first, with a 71-63 victory over Romeoville. Lemont (4-0) was led by senior twins Rokas Castillo (32 points), who was the tourney MVP, and Matas Castillo (19 points, 6 assists).

The Porters (3-1) have won the tournament nine times, which is the most by any team. That included last year when they defeated Bradley-Bourbonnais 61-38 in the championship game en route to a 7-0 start on the season. Lockport finished 18-13 last season but graduated seven seniors from that team.

"We're competing, playing hard, and getting better," Hespell said. "We don't have that much experience back from last year so we are still looking to see which guys step up in the rotation."

Lockport opened the season and tournament on Monday, Nov. 21 with a 41-30 win over Providence (0-4). A great start of 18-2 helped propel the Porters, who led 30-18 at halftime but were held to one single point in the third quarter. Falcon led with 19 points and Labuda hauled down eight rebounds to go with seven points.

Two days later, Lockport got off to a much slower start. But then came on strong in the second half to defeat Plainfield Central 60-38. Labuda poured in 22 points and also added eight rebounds and four steals. Falcon contributed 16 points and five rebounds, while senior guard Quinton Hunter chipped in 10 points, five rebounds, and three steals. The Porters trailed 26-22 at halftime but outscored Plainfield Central (1-3) 38-12 in the second half.

On Friday, Nov. 25, the Porters couldn't overcome another slow start and lost to Romeoville 52-37. Lockport trailed 25-14 at halftime and couldn't catch up, in part to only shooting 34 percent from the field. The defense did force 21 Romeoville (3-1) turnovers. Falcon scored 19 and Hunter had 12 points. Junior guard Meyoh Swansey led the 'Ville with 20 points and added three assists. senior forward Devonte Cunningham chipped in with 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Spartans.

The last two seasons have been winning ones for Lockport, the first time that has happened since the Porters had three straight between 2009-10 and 2011-12. But Falcon certainly expects them to have another one this season.

"I expect us to have more wins than losses," Falcon said when asked what his goal was for the team this season. "I also expect everyone on the bench to be able to come in and contribute."