

By Randy Whalen

In the midst of a topsy-turvy season, the Lockport Township girl's basketball team hoped to keep the momentum last week.

But the Porters had problems scoring in two of their games and went 1-2 in the first calendar week of the new year.

"A lot can happen," Lockport girls basketball coach Darien Jacobs said. "This team is good when we can score."

Lockport showed that on Thursday, Jan. 5 in a 54-34 victory over Bradley-Bourbonnais in a SouthWest Suburban Conference crossover. It was only the Porter's fourth home game of the season and was also their 12th win in the past 15 games. That moved their record to 13-8.

In that 15-game stretch, the most points Lockport surrendered was 47 in a 47-40 home loss to Lincoln-Way West on Dec. 6. Even better, the most points the Porters have given up since then is 42.

"Our defense," Lockport senior guard Pat Tamasaukas said of what had sparked Lockport in the winning stretch. "We are moving as a team now. We know how each other and understand how each other plays.

"We had a bunch of close games. Now we use our speed on defense. We just have to stop forcing shots on offense and move the ball around."

Tamasaukis led the way with 17 points. Sophomore forward Alaina Peetz poured in 12 points and added five rebounds, while junior forward Veronica Bafia (8 points, 6 rebounds) and senior guard Kaya Osinski (7 points) also contributed for Lockport. Junior point guard Sadie Grabow (10 points) and junior swing player Ellie Haggard (7 points, 15 rebounds) contributed for the Boilermakers (5-9).

"We've grown so much together," Bafia said. "We know the spots to cover to make us a unit. We just communicate well."

Another bright spot for the Porters was freshman forward, Bridget Ferriter, who had six rebounds, two points, and a blocked shot in the win over Bradley. Standing 6 feet tall, Ferriter is the tallest player on the team.

"For a freshman, she's holding her own," Jacobs said. "She sees the floor well and is probably the best passer on the team. I'm glad to have her for another three years and build her confidence."

Against the Boilermakers, Lockport scored the first six points but only led 6-3 after the first quarter. Ahead 8-5, Bafia scored on a trio of layups in a 13 -2 burst for a 21-7 advantage. Tamasaukis hit one of her four three-pointers with 21 seconds left in the second quarter and Lockport led 25-14 at halftime. Bradley-Bourbonnais never got closer than 10 points in the second half. It was 42-23 after three.

But the Porters would have taken 42 points in their other two games in the week. On Tuesday, Jan. 3, they traveled to New Lenox and lost 39-24 to a good Providence team that was 12-7 overall at the end of last week.

Jacobs credited Bafia for playing good defense. Especially since senior guard Annalise Pietrzyk, who scored 37 points on Dec. 28 to pace Providence to a 64-59 win over Downers Grove South in the fifth-place game of the Carl Sandburg Girls Basketball Classic in Orland Park, was held to four points but did have a team-high eight rebounds.

Junior guard Gabi Bednar, who had missed some time during the Sandburg Holiday Tournament because of an illness, led the Celtics with 15 points. She had seven points in the second quarter as Providence increased a 7-4 advantage to a 20-6 halftime lead. The Porters had 20 turnovers and saw their five-game winning streak snapped.

Then, on Saturday, Jan. 7, Lockport traveled close by for another local nonconference matchup and lost 39-35 to Joliet Central.

Despite the loss, it was the eighth straight game that the Porters held their opponents to under 40 points. Trailing 22-11 in the second quarter, Lockport went on a 14-0 run to take a 25-22 lead in the third quarter. But it went cold again at the end and the scrappy Steelmen (8-10) pulled out the victory. Peetz led the Porters with 16 points.

The week after Christmas, Lockport traveled to Chicago and captured the title of the Perspectives Tournament which took place between Monday, Dec. 26, and Thursday, Dec. 29.

The scores in order were 43-30 over Westinghouse, 42-19 against Christ the King, 60-13 over King, 49-17 against Perspectives-IIT/Joslin Perspectives-IIT/JoslinChicago, and 37-22 in the championship game over Perspectives Leadership/Technology.

A highlight was sophomore guard Lucy Hynes coming off the bench and scoring all 13 of her game-high points in the first half of the victory over King. Lockport led 22-10 at halftime of the title game and coasted to the win. Peetz and Bafia both had 12 points, while Osinski contributed eight points.

The Porters (13-9 through Jan. 7) went 15-15 last season and know if they are going to end up with a winning record they will have to navigate through a tough SWSC Blue schedule which started this week with games against Sandburg and Lincoln-Way East.

"The rest of our schedule is a tough game, tough game, tough game, and repeat," Jacobs said. "We will play some very skilled and talented teams."

But Bafia is confident in her team's ability to come through.

"We have some good competition coming up," Bafia said. "But I think we will do well the rest of the season."