

The Salem High School girls' basketball team gave the Eastern Lady Musketeers all they could handle for 16 minutes in their November 26 showdown in Pekin.

Unfortunatley for the Lady Lions high school basketball games last 32 minutes and Eastern used a third quarter run to take control of the contest and seal the win, 63-39.

Head Coach Mike McBride said the spurt was sparked by his team's defense which forced turnovers and led to easy baskets.

When Eastern wasn't turning up the heat on defense, they were scoring inside the paint.

Krista Roberts scored 24 points and grabbed 12 rebounds and Brooke Rodewig added 19 points and six rebounds.

“(The paint) is where we did most of our damage, but everyone did good things,” McBride said. “Our gaurds did some good things defensively and in feeding the post. They basically sacrificed their own looks at the basket to get the ball inside like we needed.”

McBride said his team is not necissarily looking to play up-tempo, but they felt like it was an area where they could have success against Salem.

“We knew from tape and having watched Salem that they like to jam the rebounder, keep one

or two people around every time we got a rebound,” he said, “we knew if we get the ball out to the guards we'd basically be playing four on three or five on four.

“They kept trying to jam the rebounder and we were able to run and take advantage.”

Eastern led by just one point at half time and was battling some foul trouble.

“We are maturing and when I say that I mean we are understanding that playing defense means making teams take tough shots,” McBride said. “That's what we did against Salem. Good defense is rebounding those missed shots, not necessarily getting steals and gambling. We're buying into that concept and we are able to frustrate teams because they are finding it hard to score.”

After the win, Eastern is 4-1. McBride said he breaks the team down into five game segments and the goal is always to win three or four games out of those five.

“I think 4-1 is a good start and we are 1-0 in the conference and are off to a good start,” McBride said.

The second five-game segment starts Saturday against Brownstown.

“Brownstown is well-coached,” McBride said. “. . . Their big post player was out the first two games of the season. She is 6'2” with a big body who can do some things. I don't know if she is going to play or not. They play Thursday at Seymour, so we will get an idea Thursday night on where they are.”

In the past, the Eastern-Brownstown game was played in the afternoon, but because neither school's boys' teams play that night, the ladies will play in primetime.

For Salem, who was led in scoring by Brittney Walker with 17 points, they dropped to 4-2 on the season and will host Orleans Thursday.

Photo provided by Gina Farmer