

Otterbein's Fourth Quarter Surge Snaps John Carroll's 10-Game Winning Streak

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UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, Ohio, Feb. 9, 2022 – In a close game of basketball, a single run, especially near the end of a game, can determine its outcome. This was the case tonight, where a clutch performance late proved to be the difference.

A 12-0 run late in the fourth quarter led the Otterbein Cardinals (15-6, 9-5 OAC) to an upset victory over the WBCA/D3hoops No. 8 John Carroll Blue Streaks (17-3, 12-2 OAC) by a score of 57-52 at the Tony DeCarlo Varsity Center in an Ohio Athletic Conference women's basketball matchup.

For the Blue Streaks, the loss snaps a 10-game winning streak, which was their longest since the 2019-2020 season (also 10 games), and represents their first loss in 2022. Along with a Baldwin Wallace victory tonight, the loss also moves John Carroll to second place in the OAC, while Baldwin Wallace re-claims the top spot in the conference.

For the Cardinals, the victory splits their season series with John Carroll, avenging a 52-47 home loss back on January 12.

“We talked about every kid bringing it, and bringing something to the game that maybe we haven't been doing all year,” Otterbein Head Coach Diana Noles said. “I feel like we've had pieces, and we've had some kids playing well here and there, but we had yet to put it together,

and tonight they finally put it together. [They] played well, pushed through some adversity, and stayed strong.”

This adversity started early for the Cardinals, as they missed their first seven shots of the game. John Carroll was able to cash in on these missed opportunities, beginning the game with a 7-0 run that took up nearly the first half of the opening quarter.

In what turned out to be a tightly contested first quarter, Otterbein would respond with a 6-0 run of their own, making it a one-point game with less than a minute left in the frame. A layup from John Carroll freshman guard Maddie Pietrowski would end the run and give the Blue Streaks a 9-6 lead through one.

In the second quarter, while both teams started to convert from the field, it was the Cardinals who came out ahead. With John Carroll leading 16-13, seven consecutive points from Otterbein’s graduate student guard Angelia Jackson not only gave them their first lead of the night, but a 20-16 advantage with just over four minutes left in the first half. Jackson would finish the game with 15 points and a team-high 10 rebounds, her first double-double of the season.

But John Carroll responded, as a pair of buckets from graduate student forward Nicole Heffington tied the game at 20 with just over three minutes remaining in the first half. But the Cardinals fought back with a 6-0 run, giving themselves a 26-20 lead with nearly a minute left in

the half. A layup from John Carroll senior center Olivia Nagy would end the run, with the Blue Streaks trailing 26-22 at halftime.

In the third, John Carroll was able to regain control. A 7-0 run propelled them to a 34-30 lead with nearly four minutes to go in the quarter. Eventually, Blue Streaks senior guard Hannah Bouchy drained a deep three-pointer to beat the buzzer, with John Carroll leading 40-36 through three.

Despite facing a deficit heading into the fourth, the Cardinals refused to quit.

“Sometimes we haven’t handled that kind of stuff great. We’ve been talking a lot about it at practice,” Noles said. “I think they did a good job of pulling together and still playing how we were playing.”

The fourth quarter ended up being the turning point of the game, with the Cardinals keeping it close throughout. A hook shot from Nagy gave the Blue Streaks a 46-40 lead with under five minutes left in the period. But this was where the John Carroll momentum stopped for good.

Otterbein was able to answer back with a jumper from freshman guard Haley Dennis. Some pesky defense and 10 consecutive points from sophomore guard Katie McCary would lead to not only the Cardinals’ first advantage since the third quarter, but a 52-46 lead with under a minute left in the game. McCary would lead all scorers with 18 points.

Like the Cardinals, the Blue Streaks, too, did not give up. Senior guard Sarah Balfour was able to knock down three-pointers on back-to-back John Carroll possessions to cut Otterbein's lead to two with less than 30 seconds remaining. Soon after, Otterbein's Jackson missed the second of a pair of free throws, and a Heffington rebound gave John Carroll a chance to tie or take the lead.

However, an errant pass from Heffington and a steal from Otterbein senior guard Jenna Hoschouer sealed John Carroll's fate. A pair of Hoschouer free throws would be the final points of the night, with Otterbein pulling off the five-point upset.

"Otterbein played a really tough, aggressive game," John Carroll Head Coach Beth Andrews said. "We just had an off night."

For the Blue Streaks, Nagy finished a block away from her third career triple-double, totaling a team-high 16 points, game-high 16 rebounds, season-high nine blocks, and four steals. While she entered the game ranking fifth in all of Division III in field-goal percentage (61.0%), tough Otterbein defense led to Nagy finishing just 6-of-16 (37.5%) from the field.

"[Nagy's] definitely a point of emphasis. She's a huge part of their success," Noles said.

"They're a great, great team. There's a reason they're top-10 in the country. We knew we had our hands full with her inside, but credit to our kids. They fought."

Balfour also chipped in with 13 points off the bench for the Blue Streaks, her third straight game scoring in double-figures.

As a team, John Carroll had a challenging night shooting the ball. While shooting 45.0% from the field heading into the contest, which ranked seventh in Division III, Otterbein held them to just 20-of-57 (35.1%) shooting.

“[Otterbein] did a really good job of altering us. They made everybody take tough shots and earn every point,” Andrews said.

This game was also a special night for Otterbein senior forward Kathleen DeCarlo, whose late grandfather is the namesake of John Carroll’s gymnasium.

“She was pretty emotional after the game. It made me emotional, it made me tear up,” Noles said.

But John Carroll realizes that while this loss is a setback, it also gives them a chance to re-group for the final stretch of the regular season before the OAC Tournament.

“I think that this was a little bit of a reset moment for us to realize how worthy we are to be played against,” Andrews said. “The team needs to know that and be willing to accept that challenge.”