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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

FARMINGTON - The Lady Bearcats opened the 2011-2012 season with a bang on Monday night with a 65-57 win over rival Notre Dame in the first round of the Farmington Tournament. It was sloppy at times, but the Lady 'Cats were still able to pull out the 'W' and advance in the tournament.

"I definitely didn't feel like we brought our 'A' game today," head coach Chad Allen said. "We had a lot of turnovers, which is very uncharacteristic of us. [Notre Dame has] a pretty aggressive full court press, and we had a few turnovers in it. A lot of that can be attributed to not using ball fakes, but that can be fixed."

The Lady Bearcats' offense exploded early, with Alison Jarrell hitting three consecutive three pointers in roughly a minute. Erika Cobb came off the bench and provided a great performance - she was really aggressive in the passing lanes and hit big shots when they were needed.

"Like I told the girls after the game - offensively, we can score enough points to win every game, but defensively we did a very poor job of closeouts and keeping them in front of us," Allen continued. "It seemed like [Notre Dame] got to the basket any time they wanted, and we'll have to improve on that."

Brittany Harris came out strong in the second quarter, hitting two shots in the team's first two possessions of the frame and pulling down several rebounds. Cobb hit a three late in the second quarter to give the 'Cats a 32-22 lead at the half.

Harris' dominance in the paint continued in the third quarter, with a block and four rebounds in the first two minutes of the frame. Cobb continued to play well, coming up with two steals and hitting a 12-footer to end a 9 point Notre Dame run late in the quarter. Mollie Whitehead completed a three-point play at the 3:00 mark to give the 'Cats a 41-33 lead.

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came up with two steals in the last two minutes of the third to help the Bulldogs pull within five, but Cobb came up with another steal and dumped the ball to Hannah Noe for a layup at the buzzer to give the 'Cats a 47-40 lead at the end of the third.

Whitehead hit a shot from the paint to open the fourth quarter. Paige Patterson, who also had a solid game in the paint, had an offensive board and putback at the 5:20 mark to give the 'Cats a 57-46 lead. The Bearcats' defense played much better in the fourth quarter, with Patterson, Cobb, Jarrell, and Katelynn Frazier all coming up with steals. The 'Cats put up a quick five point run at the end of the game to claim the win and move on to the semifinal round of the tournament.

Coach Allen was pleased with his team's performance in the paint throughout the contest.

"I thought all three of our bigs did extremely well tonight - Brittany, Paige, and Mollie all had good games," Allen said. "We like to get the ball inside, and we scored a lot of points in the lane. I think most of our points came from under the basket, and it's good to see that. It opens up the outside when we do that for Alison [Jarrell], Hannah [Noe], and Erika [Cobb] to knock down shots."

While he was happy with the win, Allen was concerned about his team's hit-and-miss performance on defense - much akin the old saying 'Offense sells tickets, defense wins championships', he feels his team need to get better every game on the defensive front to be successful.

"Offensively, we have a great ball team," Allen said. "We've got enough scorers on the team that the offense can really take care of itself, but defensively, we're going to have to get to working a little harder and get better each game."

The Lady Bearcats will be in action again on Friday night at 7:30 p.m., when they take on the Poplar Bluff Lady Mules in the semifinal round.

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