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Taylor, Owls Hang On For Win At Columbia

JANUARY 20TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

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COLUMBIA - In a battle between the top two preseason teams in the AMC, freshman Blake French (St. Charles, Mo.) did a lot of work off the scoresheet to power the William Woods University women's basketball team to a 69-64 win over Columbia College on Thursday night. The freshman had just seven points on the night, but singlehandedly keyed a seven-point push in the closing minutes of the game.

The Cougars struck first and jumped out to a quick 5-0 lead, but WWU answered, going up 8-7 with just 3:32 gone. The rest of the first half was a dogfight, seeing 10 lead changes and two ties.

Down five, a three-pointer from Megan Aubuchon (Old Monroe, Mo.) narrowed the gap to 26-28 with 4:40 to go, but despite a free throw make from Andrews, Columbia pushed back out to a 33-29 lead with 1:15 on the clock.

French canned a trey with just under a minute to go, pulling the Owls to within one. WWU forced a shot clock turnover on the Cougars's next possession, but the freshman couldn't find the range as the Owls held for the last shot and the team went into the break down 32-33.

The second half was every bit as much a dogfight as the first, seeing four more lead changes and two ties over the first 10 minutes.

With 9:34 to go, the Owls would grab the lead for good, as Sharron Andrews

(Oakland/Hayward, Calif.) forced a turnover at halfcourt and drew a foul as she was headed for an easy layup. The senior swished both, with Aubuchon adding a pair of buckets for a 59-54 lead with 7:53 left.

A pair of buckets from Columbia closed the gap to 59-58 with 5:04 left, but French put the Owls on her shoulders over the next three minutes to push the WWU lead back to 66-58. A steal led to a Taylor triple to stretch the lead back to 62-58, and she walked in a fast-break layup after picking off an entry pass for a 64-58 edge. She finished off the spurt with a jumper from the left elbow.

Columbia racked a trey with just over a minute to pull within five, but WWU was able to hold off the push and pick up the win.

Andrews led the Owls offense with 17 points on the night, with Aubuchon and Ashlee Taylor (Dexter, Mo.) each adding 11. The Owls were outrebounded 43-38 on the night, but Aubuchon led the squad with seven. Heather English led all scorers with 23 points, adding 10 rebounds as well. Julie Teeple also pulled down 10 rebounds for the Cougars.

William Woods returns to action on Saturday, hosting Williams Baptist in a 2 p.m. tipoff. The game is the first of a home doubleheader with the men's team and the first in a three-game homestead.

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