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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

FARMINGTON - A pair of free throws from Zhanesha Dickerson gave the Miller Career Academy Phoenix the lead just over a minute into the second quarter of Friday night's Class 4 Quarterfinal game.

The Lady Bearcats would never get it back.

Less than 200 yards from where the Phoenix handed LBB their first loss of the season, Miller Career Academy again defeated the Lady Bearcats by a 17 point margin, with a 51-34 final score (the December contest, held three months to the day earlier, ended with a 50-33 final).

The Phoenix were fashionably late to the game; tip was originally scheduled for 6:00 p.m., but had to be pushed back due to 'transportation difficulties', according to Farmington Civic Center staff. Despite the late start, the Phoenix shut down the usually potent Lady Bearcat offense with outstanding high-pressure defense.

"Offensively, we didn't really get things going, but you've got to give credit to Miller, they played really excellent defense," head coach Chad Allen said after the game. "I thought we played really well defensively. We battled hard, and we drew three or four charges. That's one thing we talked about a lot, and I thought we really battled hard."

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"We had talked a lot about their physicality," he continued. "I thought, for the most part, we played really aggressive and physical along with them. We wore down there toward the end because of it, having to push and shove around so much inside.

Dickerson led the Phoenix with 21 points, and Coach Allen was quick to compliment the lone senior for her shooting ability.

"She's a very good jump-shooter. There's not a lot of jump-shooters in basketball like there were back in the day," Allen said of Dickerson. "She's a great shooter, and she can take you off the dribble and knock them down. She had an excellent game tonight."

The game got off to a slow start, but the Lady 'Cats were able to squeak out a 6-5 lead after the first quarter. Dickerson's free throws sparked a 10-2 run for the Phoenix in the second quarter that helped Miller Career to a 21-14 halftime cushion.

A long jumper from Paige Patterson and layup from Brittany Harris pulled LBB within three at the 6:00 mark of the third. The Phoenix were able to capitalize on a few Lady Bearcat turnovers late in the frame to take a 10 point lead into the fourth quarter.

A trey from Erika Cobb pulled the Bearcats within seven at the 5:40 mark in the fourth quarter, but it would be as close as LBB would get to a lead for the rest of the game. The Phoenix ran off another 10-2 run and utilized their delay game late to take the 51-34 victory and advance to the Show Me Showdown.

Despite the disappointing finale, Allen was proud of his team's 23-5 effort this season. It was a big improvement over the previous year, especially considering their short bench and sophomore-laden lineup.

"These girls had a great year; we made it one step further than we did last year, and we'll have everybody back next season," he said. "I want to motivate them to keep working hard over the summer; these girls want to go to the final four, and I think they'll get in there and get the work done."

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