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Gross scores 1,000th point as Conemaugh Valley girls rally to beat Windber

By **CORY ISENBERG**
 The Tribune-Democrat

WINDBER — in the second half, Conemaugh Valley was trailing host Windber by 14 points on Monday night.

Blue Jays coach Teri Cruse made a personnel shift that sparked her squad, which went on to edge the Ramblers 52-48 in a key WestPAC North matchup.

"We started out that second half not getting rebounds or going after the loose balls, and I thought we needed something to shake it up," Cruse said. "We can go 10 or 11 deep every night, so that's why I knew psychologically it would affect the starters that were out there, but I knew we were putting in a pretty good defensive crew. And at that point, that's what we needed, some people to go in and go after the ball and hustle. That second group that came in, played wonderfully. I put them in there for defense and they gave us offense, too."

The Blue Jays, who trailed 35-21 at the 6:18 mark of the third, ended the frame down by just one, 38-37.

Conemaugh Valley also got a lift in the third from senior guard Taylor Gruss, who hit a 3-pointer with 27.8 seconds in the quarter, tallying her 1,000th career point.

"Getting the win was bigger than hitting 1,000," said Gruss, who came into the game needing 13 points and finished with a game-high 19 and eight rebounds. "I'm glad I got it. There's a big weight off my back. Now I can just go out and play and not worry about how many more I need. It's done and over with."

The Ramblers stormed back in the fourth, building a five-point edge, 46-41 with 4:53 left. But Conemaugh Valley had an answer, pulling even twice, the second time at 48 with 1:46 left. Gruss added a layup and a pair of free throws down the stretch to give the Blue Jays the margin of victory.

"They played harder than us in the second half, it's as simple as that," Windber coach Rich Price said. "They got to every loose ball, and I give them all the credit in the world. We had a real good first half. Second half, we were a little flat. They just wanted it a little more than we did. But it's just one conference loss, and we'll see what happens. They just had a little bit more energy than we did."

The Ramblers led 13-10 after the first quarter and were up 29-20 at the half with Windber's Jen Rasko scoring 10 of her team-high 16 points in the first two quarters.

Windber, which also got eight rebounds from Rachel Lovely, opened the third quarter with a 6-1 run.

Carly Gruss added 10 points for Conemaugh Valley, which also got seven rebounds from Beth Kendera.

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Photos



Conemaugh Valley's Taylor Gruss drives to the basket against Windber's Jen Rasko on Monday night during the Blue Jays' 52-48 victory over the Ramblers. **John Rucosky/The Tribune-Democrat** (Click for larger image)



Conemaugh Valley's Beth Kendera (right) tries to get a shot off against Windber's Jen Rasko on Monday night. **John Rucosky/The Tribune-Democrat** (Click for larger image)

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