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Timely defense helps Endicott men take down SSU in shootout

By Dan Harrison correspondent

BEVERLY — Endicott head coach Phil Rowe described last night's home game against Salem State as a track meet because it seemed the first team to score a hundred points would take home the victory.

As it turned out, the Gulls defense proved to be too big of a hurdle for the Vikings, which squandered a few late possessions to fall on the road, 93-89.

Endicott (7-5) rotated between various zone defenses to limit penetration and keep SSU's Brian Clark (15 first-half points) from producing in the second half. Trailing by two late, the Vikings came out of a time out to find the Gulls in a man-to-man defense

Salem State (6-3) had been clicking offensively all night, but appeared out-of-sync and surprised by what was in front of them and failed to get off a quality shot.

After the stop, Endicott extended its lead to five and was able to hold on for the win.

"It was a track meet, obviously they are on of the best (Division 3) teams in New England," said Rowe. "We are a multiple defensive team, it depends on the situation. I felt that changing it up a little bit would be confusing to them and apparently it was."

Salem State still had a chance to tie the game up after John Henault missed a lay up and Clark came up with the rebound. But the Viking forward tried to push the break with a quick pass, which was intercepted and then put through the dish by Erik Callo.

Callo (14 points, 10 boards and two blocks), who's been out of the lineup most of the season, had a strong game in the post against an undersized Salem State team. Along with the big-man, Endicott had four other players reach double-digit scoring as Henault (19 points), Lachlan Magee (16 points), Lance Greene (15 points) and Andrew Makris (15 points) all found nylon with relative consistency.

"That's how we play, everybody shares the ball hopefully and if we share the ball we got a chance to be okay," said Rowe, who also talked about Callo's play. "It was nice to have him come back with a positive influence. He demands the ball in the post and our guards finally figured out if we reverse the ball we could get it in (to the post)."

The Endicott guards did a good job of feeding the post, partly due to some lackadaisical defense played by the Viking back court, which didn't pressure the ball handlers the way coach Chris Harvey would have liked.

"If you look at the score this had nothing to do with offense," said Harvey, who's team held the number one team in the country, Middlebury, to only 66 points last week.

"We didn't show up to play hard defensively and that's all the difference in the world. Our whole defense is predicated on ball pressure and trying to force the bigs out of the post. It was all about effort. That's really what this one comes down to."

Salem State opened with a barrage of three-pointers, a result of the zone defense from Endicott. Nate Simpson led the Vikings with 21 points.

