

Sports

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Bickett, Elder carry Owls to home victory

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Playing in most likely their last home game, Brandon Bickett, Logan Elder and Justin Shand carried the Laguna Blanca boys basketball team to a 56-29 victory over visiting Dunn on Friday night.

Those three seniors combined for 21 points, 22 rebounds, four assists and two steals to help the Owls improve to 9-7 this season, and make a push for the CIF-Southern Section playoffs.

"I've had these guys since they were freshmen," Laguna Blanca coach Sal Rodriguez said. "I was just reminiscing, at Thacher four years ago, I had them on the court as freshmen and I said, 'we're going to be pretty good when they are seniors.'"

The Owls jumped out to an early 9-0 lead as Dunn racked up three turnovers and started 0-for-5 from the field in the first four and a half minutes.

"It was awful," Dunn coach Catherine Henrey said. "In the first half

56
29



I felt like there was a lid on the basket."

Khaleeq Sattaar El ended the scoring drought for the Earwigs with a layup in

traffic, but Dunn could not steal any momentum.

"It was really hard for the guys to stay intense on defense feeling like they weren't rewarded on offense at all," Henrey said.

With time winding down in the first period, Andrew Vignolo hit a jumper in the paint to give the Owls a 13-5 lead.

Laguna Blanca came out on fire in the second quarter with back-to-back 3-pointers from JT Aubrey and Eddie Conk. The Earwigs were scoreless for the first three and a half minutes and Bickett added another 3-pointer with just 4:35 left before halftime to start the rout and give

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the Owls a 22-5 lead.

Dunn was forced to play catch-up and needed big shots, fast. Chandler Hughes hit a 3-pointer from at least four feet beyond the arc to cut the Owl lead to 22-8, but that was the only 3-pointer from the team in the first half. Laguna Blanca took a 34-12 lead into halftime thanks to a 21-7 second quarter.

"They are an outstanding 3-point shooting team and they are averaging 15, 16 3-point shots a game," Henrey said. "They had eight (tonight) and they capitalized on those, and we just had a lot of difficulties on offense."

Laguna Blanca opened the second half strong as well. The Owls got a quick 3 from Elder and went on a 7-3 run. Dunn guard Danny Cullingham was doing his best to pull the game within striking range.

"Danny plays with heart every single day," Henrey said. "He is our backbone. He doesn't score a lot of points, (but) he rebounds well for us, he's got a lot of steals for us and he's involved in every play. He's definitely our MVP for the season

and I hate to see him go."

The senior had three assists, and four offensive rebounds in the second half, but it was too little too late. After the third period, the Owls had a 45-21 lead.

Overall, Dunn played well in the second half. They scored 17 points compared to the Owls' 22, and they had only five turnovers. The first half hole they dug themselves was too much though. The 56-29 loss drops the Earwigs to 1-9 overall this season and sends coach Henrey into a long offseason.

"We still have a lot of youth actually," Henrey said. "We have three seniors starting that are graduating, but we have a starting sophomore and three freshmen on the bench. Over the summer, hopefully we can get some work in."

Rodriguez and the Owls will be waiting for a phone call from the CIF this weekend to see if they will be playing next week.

"We've played really good defense the entire season," Rodriguez said. "We're going to play a lot better competition (in the playoffs), so I wanted them to use this second half as a practice."

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