

Hawks Shoot Down Bullets For First Win Of Season

Wollongong Hawks Basketball

Basketball Clubs

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For a mild-mannered kind of guy, Rotnei Clarke resorted to his angry alter ego to spark the Illawarra Hawks to their first win of the season on Sunday against the Brisbane Bullets.

Down by 15 at quarter-time and 10 at half-time, the Hawks were a different team in the second half, outscoring the Bullets 39-16 in a decisive third period to set up a 105-96 triumph.

Tempers flared midway through the third quarter when Hawks forward Nick Kay fell heavily after a hard foul from Bullets guard Adam Gibson. Players from both sides converged, with Illawarra import Demetrius Conger and Bullets centre Tom Jervis briefly shaping up.

Following a five-minute review by the three referees, a whopping four players -- two from each team -- were hit with unsportsmanlike fouls, while Clarke wore a technical foul.

Jervis was left with a bloodied eye minutes later when he caught a stray elbow from Conger after Clarke's lay-up put Illawarra up by seven.

But with a steely-eyed Clarke taking his half-time tally from 11 to 24, they dominated the final five minutes of the third quarter and marched into the fourth with an 84-71 lead.

Clarke finished with a team-high 26 points, while fellow import Conger had 16 of his 21 in the first half when no-one else in his team offered much resistance.

Perrin Buford led the Bullets with 26, Daniel Kickert had 21 and Stephen Holt added 17.

Clarke's three in transition gave the Hawks an early 11-5 lead before an energised Holt triggered a devastating 17-2 run.

Illawarra coach Rob Beveridge did his best to rally his troops in a much-needed time-out, but the Bullets continued to do as they pleased, connecting on 12/17 shots for a 32-17 quarter-time lead.

Ogilvy sat for all but three minutes of the first period after picking up two fouls, while Holt and the spring-heeled Buford didn't miss a shot as they combined for 19 points.

With their season in danger of slipping away, the Hawks finally awoke, cutting the deficit to a single point late in the half after Conger found his rhythm with 12 in the quarter.

But the Bullets returned fire with long bombs from Holt and Adam Gibson, skipping into the locker room with a 55-45 half-time lead punctuated by a sizzling 60 per cent shooting display.

Buford had 17 and Holt 15, while Conger (16) and Clarke (11) were the only Illawarra players in double figures.

Illawarra kept plugging away, grabbing their first lead since the first quarter and never letting it go.

Both teams face a busy Round 4. Brisbane hosts New Zealand (Thursday) and Melbourne United (Saturday), while the Hawks are on the road against Perth (Thursday) before returning for a home game against slumping Sydney (Sunday).

ILLAWARRA HAWKS 105 (Clarke 26, Conger 21, Ogilvy 15)

BRISBANE BULLETS 96 (Buford 26, Kickert 21, Holt 17)