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Sports

Emerald Defense Tops SHS

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Emerald High school's girls basketball won its first two games by playing good pressure defense. Wednesday's win over Saluda extends that trend to three games.

The Vikings adjusted their defense in the second half and outscored the Tigers 16-8 in the fourth quarter for a 55-49 comeback win at Westview Middle School.

Emerald improved to 3-1, with its lone loss Tuesday night against Greenwood. After playing in their standard 1-3-1 zone defense throughout the first half, the Vikings switched to man-to-man in the third quarter and were able to put more pressure on Saluda. "We tried to go with man and pick up the intensity," Emerald coach Anarie Duckett said. "Third quarter, we were still sagging off on them a little bit, so I told them to get up close and put a lot of pressure on them. "They played real well."

Trailing for most of the game, Emerald took its first lead off a turnover with 4:55 remaining in regulation when Emerald junior forward Aneisha Bell, who had a game-high 19 points, scored a transition layup, putting the Vikings ahead 43-41. "(Emerald forward) Amber (Green) got the (ball) and fumbled with and just threw it out there," Bell said. "I just ran back and got it."

Bell had been a role player in Emerald's first three games, but after winning the Vikings' most improved award last season, Duckett said she had the potential to break out. "Aneisha's doing a super job this year," Duckett said. "She works hard, she hustles, she knows what to do with the ball, she knows how to drive to the basket and she's just been very aggressive offensively."

Green and sophomore guard Marissa Callaham have carried most of the weight for the Vikings, so a strong game from Bell bodes well for Emerald's offense. "We knew she was headed toward a good game if she kept working hard," Duckett said. "We were a little short-handed (Wednesday) with Courtney (Scurry) not being able to play and with Tierra (Foddrell) out, too."

Saluda opened the game with eight unanswered points and led by five at halftime, but once the Vikings switched defenses, the Tigers began appearing rattled.

Saluda coach Jeanette Wilder, who became increasingly frustrated as the game went on and at one point told the Vikings' student section to "shut up," said the Tigers simply failed to convert shots down the stretch. "We got all the layup opportunities that we wanted, it was just a lack of execution," Wilder said. "I felt like we attacked the basket well, but we just couldn't make the shots."