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Sports

Vikings Dispatch NS Girls

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Emerald High School senior girls basketball player Amber Green didn't score on a dunk to clinch the Vikings' 49-47 win over Ninety Six, but in her mind, her game-winning shot might have well have been one. Down by 13 after the first quarter and trailing by seven with less than five minutes left in regulation, Green's game-winning layup clinched a win, the Vikings' fourth in their opening five games.

With the game tied at 47 and 9.6 seconds remaining, Emerald forward Abigail Cannon pulled down an offensive rebound and found Green behind the 3-point line. Green then drove the lane and dropped the ball in to seal the victory. Moments later, Green turned to Emerald coach Anarie Duckett and said, "You know that was as good as dunk, don't you?" "We'll count that as a dunk," Duckett said.

For a team playing its third game in four days, Emerald was outthusted at times, but somehow managed to find a way to win. "It feels real good because after (we lost) the Greenwood game (on Tuesday) we were real down," Green said. "Then we came through against Saluda and tonight just topped it all off."

Ninety Six led 45-38 late in the fourth quarter but Emerald went on a 8-0 run thanks to clutch free throw shooting by Cannon and Aneisha Bell. "They fouled us a lot and we didn't make a tremendous amount of free throws, but that kept us in the game," Duckett said.

With 44.9 second remaining and Emerald up one, Green stole an inbounds pass, was fouled and made one of two free throws to put Emerald ahead 47-45. Ninety Six forward Quitta Tolbert was fouled moments later and made both her free throws to tie the game just prior to Green's game-winner. "You try to tell them not to foul, but crunch time you can't be calling for that. You've got to let the girls play," Ninety Six coach John Coster said. "I mean, we can't blame the refs. We had our chances and Emerald played very well."

Ninety Six looked on its way to a rout when Tolbert and forward Sireena Boyd, who had a game-high 21 points, combined for an 8-0 opening run in the first quarter as the Wildcats turned Emerald turnovers into easy layups. The Wildcats led 19-6 following one quarter, but Emerald played much more in control the second period and outscored Ninety Six 16-3 to make it 22-22 at the half. "It was tremendous. I don't know how many points we were down by the first quarter, but I know we got way behind," Duckett said. "I told them before the game to come out fast and finish strong. After the game, I said, ♦At least we did one of the two."