

By Randy Whalen

The Lockport Township girls' basketball team is continuing to find its Way.

But, with young players like Addie Way, the Porters should be able to do that.

Way, along with fellow sophomore guard Laura Arstikaitis each scored eight points last week as Lockport lost its home opener, on Thursday, Dec. 7, by a score of 46-35 to a very good Lincoln-Way East team.

It was the first SouthWest Suburban Conference Blue Division game for the Porters (5-5, 0-1 through Dec. 9) and the second for Lincoln-Way East (8-2, 1-1 through Dec. 9).

But despite the double-digit loss to a good team, the Porters saw positives to that game and the start to their season.

"It's still early in the season," Lockport coach Darien Jacobs said. "We want to win games but we want growth. We have a young team and Lincoln-Way East is an established, veteran team (the Griffins had no seniors last season and returned most of that team).

"We didn't roll over, we didn't give up. The main goal is to compete in every game, to make sure that our opponents know that they are up for a good game. We're trying to grow and do what we can do to get better."

A poor start was the difference in the game against the Griffins. Lockport never led but only trailed 6-5 following a jumper by Way with 5:39 left in the first quarter. Way scored the first five points for the Porters.

"I'm just having fun playing with my team," Way said. "We have to execute more on offense, read the defense, and run our plays better. We gave (the Griffins) a fight. We didn't want to lose to a team that good.

"I'm happy with the growth and effort in the game but if we would have started better, we could have won it."

Instead, it was Lincoln-Way East going on a 13-0 first quarter run to go up 19-5. Senior guard Lilly Dockemeyer, who had a game-high 17 points, scored nine of them in the first quarter, including banking in a three-pointer right before the buzzer to give the Griffins a 22-7 lead after the opening quarter.

Behind six straight points from 6-foot-6 senior forward Hayven Smith, who has committed to the University of Illinois, Lincoln-Way East extended its lead to 28-7 and 30-10 midway through the second quarter. But Way hit her second 3-pointer of the first half and forward Veronica Bafia (7 points), who is the only senior on the team for Lockport, and junior forward Lucy Hynes (5 points) had layups as the Porters drew within 30-17 at halftime.

It was still 39-22 after three quarters and 43-29 when Smith (10 rebounds) scored with 2:51 to play in the game. But Bafia and Arstikaitis arced in consecutive 3-pointers, the last with 1:51 remaining, to pull the Porters within 43-35. Dockemeyer, however, hit 3-of-4 free throws in the final 40 seconds to seal the win.

Freshman forward Evelyn Ingram added five points for Lockport. Senior forward Maddie Yacobozzi scored seven points and senior guard Lana Kerley, who went over 1,000 career points earlier this season, finished with five points for the Griffins.

"Addie has been our primary ball handler and facilitator," Jacobs said of Way. "Hopefully she and the team can build off of this."

After opening the season with three wins in their first five games, the Porters had an 11-day break from games. They resumed play on Saturday, Dec. 2 with a 34-29 loss to St. Laurence in Burbank. The Vikings were 9-2 through Dec. 11. Lucy Hynes had 11 points and Way chipped in with six points in the loss.

Then on Monday, Dec. 4, Lockport had a long trek to face Bradley-Bourbonnais in an SWSC crossover. In another low-scoring game, the Porters lost 43-38. Arstikaitis led Lockport with 15 points, while Lucy Hynes had nine points and Ingram added six.

Bafia, who only played half the game at St. Laurence, was out with a shoulder injury in the game against the Boilermakers, who were 5-4 through Dec. 11.

Following the Lincoln-Way East loss, the Porters opened up play at the Oak Lawn Lady Spartan Holiday Classic on Saturday, Dec. 9, and got a pair of big wins. The first was a 70-19 one over Lindblom (1-7) as Lucy Hynes had 13 points, Arstikaitis added 11 points, and junior guard Chelsea Brooks contributed nine points.

In the second game of the day, Lockport scored a season-high in points in a 75-22 victory over Thornwood (3-9). Sophomore forward Armante Dambrauskas led with 13 points. Lucy Hynes had 12 points and Bafia finished with 11 points.

The schedule wasn't going to be easy this week, however. The Porters traveled to Bolingbrook on Tuesday, Dec. 12 to take on the No. 1 ranked team in the state in an SWSC Blue game. The next day

brings a matchup with the host Spartans back at the Oak Lawn Tournament and on Thursday, Dec. 14, Lockport will be on the road at Sandburg for another SWSC Blue game.

So, with a third of the season finished, Lockport will continue to look to find its Way.

"I've enjoyed the experience," Way said of being on the varsity. "I'm learning new things and getting better at my ball-handling skills. We just want to do well at the Oak Lawn Tournament and beyond."