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College basketball: Wranglers ride defense and shooting to victory

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November 05, 2009 11:17 PM

BY WILLIE BANS

The strengths of this team, Odessa College men's basketball head coach Dennis Helms said before the season, should be defense and shooting.

Two games in, he's correct.

In their 91-61 win over North Lake College on Thursday at the OC Sports Center, the Wranglers made 17 steals and frequently hit from long range

Wranglers sophomore center Melvin Baker, with 10 points one of four players in double figures scoring in addition to nine rebounds and one block, said the team uses the shell drill in practice — a four-on-four, defensive drill in which the ball is swung around and must be accounted for — and typically the difficulty of practice depends on its success.

On Thursday, it seemed like OC (2-0 overall) ran the drill to perfection. The Wranglers collected 25 points off turnovers, compared to the Blazers' four.

"That's the way we practice it every day," said Helms, whose team defeated Wayland Baptist JV 88-21 in the season opener Tuesday.

OC built a 10-3 lead in the first five minutes and led 42-27 at halftime, the Blazers never legitimately threatening.

North Lake College, playing in its season opener, was the NJCAA Division III champion last year (OC is Division I). Against the Wranglers, it was at a size disadvantage, the tallest player, 7-foot Carl Corman, a deep bench player and their next tallest the 6-foot-6 Josh Dacus also a deep reserve.

"They were the kind of team that, with their discipline, can get you to slip up," Helms said. "But we were mentally tough enough on the defensive end not to let that happen, and we had enough offense to do it, too. ... We were more physically talented, but our guys' effort couldn't have been better,"

Nor produced more when given open looks, especially behind the arc.

The Wranglers were 7-of-23 in 3-point attempts, with freshman Kevin Schaffartzik's 4-of-8 aiding his 15-point effort.

"He can definitely do that (consistently)," Helms said of Schaffartzik.

OC sophomore Josh Brown had 15 points and a game-high 11 rebounds, while sophomore Rashad Savage had 14 points and nine rebounds.

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Kevin Buehler|Odessa American Odessa guard Desmond Woodberry (12) scores Thursday night, Nov. 5, 2009, during the first half of their Odessa College Classic at the OC Sports Center in Odessa, Texas.

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