

Cambridge v Nottingham 08/02/2017

By Cristina Gómez

Location: Cambridge University Sports Centre

Final Score: 61-76 (Nottingham)

The Blues Top Scorers: Léonie de Jonge (13), Jess Hunt (12), Paloma Navarro (11), Carla Ríos (6),
Claire Ratican (4)

Overall Free Throw Accuracy: 47%

The Blues were excited for their first home game after the holidays, ready to face Nottingham University, currently second in the Midlands 1A BUCS League. Knowing it was going to be a tough game, the Blues became more aggressive on defence which resulted in entering foul trouble early on in every quarter. This led to Nottingham obtaining 30 free-throws in the game, out of which they managed to convert 23. Coupled with the Blues' poor accuracy from that same line (10 out of 19 scored free-throws) it meant that the hosts missed opportunities to close the gap in the score board and eventually lost 61-76.

The Blues began the game strong, with Paloma Navarro's first two points opening the score board. This was quickly countered by a three-pointer by Nottingham, but Cambridge managed to keep control of the game, leading 10-7 half way through the quarter. However, their intense defence gave Nottingham the opportunity to score 6 free throws and the Blues began to struggle on offence. Another three-pointer accompanied by 3 field shots enabled the visitors to close the quarter with a 10 point lead, 12-22.

Determined to win back the game, the Blues played an excellent second quarter. Rookies Carla Ríos and Emily Lees closed the distance with two three point shots (Ríos) and a easy basket after rebound (Lees). Finding strength in their posts, the Blues capitalised on their superiority under the basket with Jess Hunt's and Léonie de Jonge brilliant moves. The smart offence coupled with a more organised and stronger defence led to the Blues winning this quarter, with an 18-10 partial.

With only a 2 point lead, Nottingham began to get nervous and committed 5 team fouls in the first 5 minutes of the second half. This took the Blues 14 times to the free-throw line, but they failed to capitalise on the advantage, scoring only 6 of the shots. Missing these opportunities cost them the quarter, and Nottingham closed it 17 points ahead, at 40-57.

Yet, the Blues did not give up. Again, Jess Hunt's work in the post proved invaluable as she repeatedly bet her defenders. Léonie de Jonge showed her variety of play, scoring both from the post position and the three-point line. Paloma Navarro joined her with another three-pointer and added 3 more with a lay up and a free throw. However, despite their efforts, the Blues did not manage to close the gap and ultimately lost by 15 points.

Although unhappy with the loss, the team has felt a notable improvement from last week and will continue to work hard to keep developing their strengths and eliminating weaknesses. With only 16 days left until their Varsity match against Oxford, the Blues are increasing their intensity in trainings and are ready to give everything they have every time they step on the court.