

Cambridge v Nottingham Trent 02/11/2016

By Cristina Gómez

Location: Cambridge University Sports Centre

Final Score: 47-45 (Cambridge)

The Blues' Top Scorers: Léonie de Jonge (19), Paloma Navarro (9), Claire Ratican (7), Becky Illingworth (7), Jess Tnuh (5)

Overall Free-throw Accuracy: 64%

The Cambridge Blues take another win in what could potentially be a season-defining game. The basketball women faced league leaders Nottingham Trent on Wednesday and fought to the end in a nail biting game that finally saw them come out on top 47-45.

Knowing that Nottingham Trent had won both their games against the Blues' long term rivals Worcester and Nottingham, the Cambridge women had a shaky start to the match. An unprecedented number of turnovers in offence meant that they were unable to reach the basket, while the guests took advantage of these mistakes and punished the Blues. However, strong defence allowed Cambridge to maintain the score low and saved them from what could have been a truly disastrous first quarter. Thus, the first 10 minutes ended with a historic low score of 7-14 for Nottingham Trent.

The second quarter saw a change in the Blues attitude, as they became more aggressive and took control of the game. Becky Illingowrth and Léonie de Jonge showed off their skills by alternating in the post and wings, constantly looking to attack the basket. Meanwhile, point guard Paloma Navarro's efforts to push on the fast break were rewarded with two layups in quick succession and captain Claire Ratican closed the quarter with free-throws that saw the Blues tie 22-22 at the end of the first half.

After a 6 minute half time break, Cambridge stepped on the court with renewed energies and hungry for the win. Nottingham Trent scored a three pointer within 2 minutes, to which Blues' rookie Jess Hunt responded with one of her own 24 seconds later. Thus began an intense period of back and forth running and scoring, which kept both teams tied until the 8th minute. Mie Monti's stifling on the ball pressure completely quashed Nottingham Trent's point-guard and caused them to turn over the ball, giving Cambridge the opportunity to get ahead on the score board for the first time, 37-32.

Entering the final quarter with a five point difference gave the Blues some breathing room and they became more confident, feeling their opponents were tiring out. However, the fight was not over and issues with transition defence and foul trouble allowed Nottingham Trent to steadily close the gap on the score board. Then, with 3 minutes left on the clock, 2 technical fouls called on the visitors lead to the eviction of the coach. This gave the Blues 2 free-throws (scored by de Jonge) and possession, which they converted. Now 7 points up, the Blues slowed down the game and played full possessions on offence. However, Trent did not give up and managed to score 6 points in the last 2 minutes of the game. Despite their efforts, this was not enough to upset the score, and so the Blues took home another well-deserved win. The Cambridge women showed excellent character, keeping their heads cool throughout the game and displaying truly impressive teamwork until the very last whistle.



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