

Heartbreaker

Trojans lose by 1 point in furious finish

By GREG DODDRIDGE
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

Center Grove girls basketball coach Joe Lentz didn't have to say anything; his body language said enough.

Standing outside his locker room after a heartbreaking 48-47 defeat against Franklin Central in the sectional final, Lentz stared ahead, leaning his head against the wall. Players filed past, their faces grim as they were comforted by assistant coaches.

When the season began in November, Center Grove had high hopes of making a lengthy tournament run. With balance, depth and an up-tempo style, the Class 4A No. 5 Trojans (18-4) were the clear favorites at the Greenwood Sectional.

But the Flashes' Jill Taylor ended any chance of Center Grove winning its second state championship in a decade when she hit a layup with 1.5 seconds remaining to finish a thrilling final 80 seconds.

With the Trojans swarming the ball, Franklin Central's Katie Dewey got a pass inside to Taylor, who somehow got a wild shot to rim in.

"We hoped to keep them farther out and hoped they didn't throw in a prayer, and the way that shot kind of rolled in, it was kind of a prayer," Lentz said. "Those are the kind of things that happen."

The Trojans made a late run, scoring seven points in 31 seconds after junior Lydia Feldman knocked down a 3-pointer with 35 seconds remaining to give Center Grove a 47-46 lead.

After Taylor's shot, Center Grove senior Jenny Gray heaved a desperation 3-pointer that fell short at the buzzer as Franklin Central fans crowded the court.

Franklin Central coach Pam Taylor, whose daughter hit the game-winning shot, wanted to take the Trojans' transition game away and chill their hot scoring. Center Grove had been scoring 61 points per game.

"We drove on them early and hit the basket, and they couldn't transition," Pam Taylor said.



STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/roberson@thejournalnet.com

Center Grove's Jenny Gray shoots over Franklin Central's Jill Taylor during their sectional final game Saturday.

"And then when they did, we got back pretty good."

With her players controlling the paint all night, Franklin Central was able to get to the foul line, making 17 of 28 free throws compared to Center Grove's 5-of-9 effort.

The Trojans committed 16 first-half turnovers, seven more than the Flashes, and trailed by five at halftime.

"We didn't respond well to any kind of pressure, particularly in the first half," Lentz said. "We were really uptight."

Despite a 13-9 advantage in the third quarter, Center Grove couldn't overcome Franklin Central's 9-of-12 shooting from the free-throw line in the fourth quarter.

The loss certainly was disap-

pointing for Lentz and the Trojans, but they still can look back on the season's many memorable moments.

The Trojans beat two-time defending state champion North Central and state-ranked Carmel to win the Metropolitan Interscholastic Conference title. And they picked up another county championship.

"The season had a lot of good moments and a lot of good wins," Lentz said. "It was an enjoyable year, no doubt about it."

"This team overcame some considerable odds when you consider the injuries that we had. And I'm proud of them. We did a lot of nice things this year."

Yet the Trojans missed a chance to grab their first section-

al title in five years as Franklin Central bounced them from the postseason for the third time since 2003.

At the end of the school year, Center Grove will lose three starting seniors, Traci Lippold, Molly Lauck and Gray.

"I gave (the seniors) a hug. There wasn't a whole lot to be said," Lentz said. "I reminded them that this is something that is part of life and you try to get over it."

Katie Hacker led the Flashes with 12 points and nine rebounds. Gray had 12 points for Center Grove.

Franklin Central (18-7) plays Lawrence North (11-11) at 10 a.m. Saturday at Southport in the first round of regional action.

Lancers can't overcome slow offense

Waldron ends Edinburgh's season

By KEN SEVERSON
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

MARIETTA

Defense kept the Edinburgh girls basketball team in the game.

Offense was another matter.

Waldron, taking advantage of Edinburgh's atrocious shooting, overcame a tentative start and posted a 66-24 win against the Lancers in the championship game of the IHSAA Class A Southwestern (Shelby) Sectional Saturday night.

Waldron (13-9) won its fourth straight game and earned its first sectional title since 2000. The Mohawks will play Northeast Dubois, winner of the West Washington Sectional, Saturday afternoon in the first round of the Southwestern Regional.

Edinburgh had a big disadvantage with the absence of leading scorer junior Heather Dowell, who had breathing difficulties in Friday's semifinal win against Morristown, and was kept out of action in the title game.

"I was feeling better, but it was my mom's decision for me not to play," Dowell said. "(Sitting out) is one of the worst feelings I've had. I wish I could have helped the out. I'm really going to miss the seniors."

Clearly Edinburgh missed Dowell's presence on the court. Edinburgh missed all 10 shots in the first quarter before senior Kristie Smith's jumper fell at the 6:12 mark of the second.

But that was the Lancers' only field goal in the first half out of 23 attempts.

Surprisingly, Waldron failed to control the game early thanks to some good defense by Edinburgh and sloppy play by the Mohawks.

"We didn't play to our potential," Edinburgh coach Bob White said. "We couldn't hit our shots and I'm not sure if we were mentally out of it because of Heather, but we missed a lot of shots that should have gone in."

"Overall though, I was happy with our play. We had a good defensive stand early by forcing them into mistakes."

Although the Lancers hit their first two field goals of the third quarter, foul trouble and some patient offense allowed the Mohawks to settle into a pattern and run away with the game.

Edinburgh didn't have a player in double-figures and shot 19 percent with an 8-for-43 performance.

Smith led the Lancers with eight points. Sophomores Sharon Jackson and Courtney Sawyer led Waldron with 13 points each.

"Even though we entered the game confident, we started out flat and wore out from playing twice already," Waldron coach Brad Gossett said. "Edinburgh is a sparky team. I feel bad because (Dowell) didn't get to play. She could have hurt us in the first half when we weren't playing well."

Edinburgh ends its season at 5-17, and loses four seniors including starters Smith, Hannah Basey and Lindsey Bowers. But White said he hoped that getting a taste of the championship round would help inspire the Lancers in the future.

"Getting here proves the girls can do it. What we need is more people playing and more competition amongst ourselves to get better," White said.

"We need to keep building a program here. That's what this is going to take for Edinburgh to be successful."

FRANKLIN COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Grizzlies win third title

By RUSS HUGHES
DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

The Franklin College women's basketball team exacted revenge on Saturday against the College of Mount St. Joseph with a 79-36 rout.

The last time the two teams met, the Lions sent the Grizzlies home with their only Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference loss of the season. That, and a rare home defeat at the hands of Mount St. Joseph last season, was all the motivation Franklin needed.

Not only did the win avenge the prior losses to the Lions, it also gave the Grizzlies their third straight HCAC championship.

Franklin coach Kim Eiler wanted her team to remember its earlier 68-65 loss at Mount St. Joseph, and senior leader Becky Ballard revealed in the challenge of showing the Lions what a focused Franklin team was capable of.

"Coach actually wrote on our team scout report yesterday, 'How bitter are you?'" Ballard said. "I guess we answered the

question today. We were very bitter, and we wanted to do something about it. We were ready from the start; there was no waiting around to get going."

The Grizzlies jumped out to an early first-half lead and never relinquished it.

Franklin's bench players outscored Mount St. Joseph's bench 16-2 in the first half, and the half ended with the Grizzlies leading by a 32-13 score.

In the second half, the Grizzlies broke the game wide open when sophomore Courtney Swain came off the bench and hit three 3-pointers and a jump shot in less than three minutes. Swain's explosion put the Grizzlies up by a 51-18 count with 12:03 left in the game.

"I only shot once in the first half, and I made it (a 3-pointer)," Swain said. "That make gave me confidence, so when I came out in the second half I told myself to shoot a little more. I caught fire, so I kept shooting."

Although Swain was happy about her offense, she acknowl-

edged that the team's defense was even more important.

"Our defense was the key to our win," said Swain. "We held them to 18 points with only 12 minutes to go in the game."

Franklin was led in scoring by Ballard and Lindsey Roberson, who each scored 15 points. Roberson also pulled down nine rebounds.

Swain, who hit four of seven 3-point attempts, finished with 14 points. Junior Kallie Kovert came off the bench late in the game and scored nine points in six minutes.

Center Grove graduate Maria Eichhold led Mount St. Joseph with 12 points. Starting point guard Brittany Beehler, who is fourth in the nation in assists per game (6.9), dished out eight assists in only 20 minutes of action.

Franklin (11-1 HCAC, 20-3 overall) closes out the regular season with a home game on Wednesday against Transylvania University and Saturday at Hanover.

Franklin's first conference tournament game will be at home Feb. 21.

FC men withstand late Lions rally for win

Special to the Daily Journal

CINCINNATI

Franklin College pulled to within one game of the lead in the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference men's basketball race by surviving a furious second-half rally by host College of Mount St. Joseph Saturday night.

With Franklin leading by a seemingly comfortable 19 points at 55-36 with 13½ minutes left, the Lions mounted a 17-2 run and pulled to within four points almost seven minutes later. But the Grizzlies regrouped and answered with a 9-2 run to go up by 11. Mount St. Joseph couldn't get closer than nine points the rest of the way.

The victory pulled Franklin (9-3 HCAC, 17-6 overall) within one game of league leader Transylvania University, who was upset 75-65 at Manchester College earlier in the day. The Grizzlies, winners of five straight contests, could move into a tie for first when they visit Transylvania Wednesday night in Lexington, Ky.

The conference regular season schedule ends Saturday. Mount St. Joseph, which had its five-game HCAC winning streak snapped, dropped to 7-5 in the conference and 14-9.

Leading the way for Franklin were senior Nick Kane and freshman Dustin Marshall, who both shot the lights out in the Lions' Harrington Center.

Kane scored 26 points, hitting 10 of 13 field goal attempts and had 11 rebounds, six assists and eight blocked shots. The eight blocks tied his own school record.

Marshall followed with 22 points, hitting eight of 11 shots, including six 3-pointers. Sophomore Brandon Ray contributed 10 points, eight rebounds and five assists in a reserve role. Franklin shot 54 percent for the night in sweeping the season series with Mount St. Joseph.

Mount St. Joseph was paced by Kevin Darthard with 22 points in a substitute effort. Derrick Jones scored 21 points and had nine rebounds and Robbie Noschang added 15 points.



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