

PREP SPORTS

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• Swimmer

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multiple-event individual state swimming champion.

In the process, she came within a half-second of breaking the state record in the 200 IM. She also became the first freshman to win more than one individual state championship since Noblesville's Lacey Boutwell in 1998.

She was only the fifth freshman in state history to accomplish the feat. And her victories helped propel Center Grove to a 10th-place team finish.

But McKeehan isn't one to talk about her success. In fact, she's very humble about her achievements and how she goes about accomplishing them.

For instance, when she qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials for the 2008 Summer Games last year, she didn't even mention it to her mom, Amy Chase.

Chase found out about it from Trojans coach Jim Todd.

"Michelle and I are really close," Chase said. "She really looks to her coach for guidance and advice on swimming. She's real dedicated to Jim. He's kind of like her swimming person."

"(But) I'm really proud of her, too, because she's just a really grounded person as far as in her faith, beliefs and values. I'm proud of the total person, not just swimming."

McKeehan's quiet demeanor and intense work ethic have impressed Todd. He admires her modesty and appreciates her effort, be it in practice or meets.

"Michelle is the most humble young lady I've ever met," said Todd, who is in his 22nd year at Center Grove. "You just come across kids every once in a while that are like that. She thinks about everybody else. She never puts herself first."

"I don't think I've ever heard her say the word 'I'."

Quietly, she's trying to perform even better at this year's state finals.

Practice has helped develop endurance. Each Wednesday, the Trojans swim test sets. One week they complete 30 100-yard swims, and the next, they do 20 200-yard swims. The swims have helped McKeehan swim more efficiently.

"It helps build up your endurance on individual strokes," she said. "It gets your muscles used to going longer. So when you're doing a shorter distance, you're body is already used to it."

McKeehan also benefited from attending the Victorian State Championships in January as a member of the USA Junior National Team in Melbourne, Australia.

McKeehan finished third in the 100 breaststroke and 200 individual medley. She finished the 100 breaststroke in 1:09.93 and was the only American swimmer in the group to finish under 1:10.

"It was exciting," McKeehan said. "It was completely different than what I was used to in U.S. swimming. I learned how I feel about my strokes, and it gave me more confidence for long-course swimming."

Even though she's swimming five seconds faster than this year's state standard qualifying time in the 100 backstroke and eight seconds faster in the 200 individual medley, McKeehan said she can still drop more time.

"I feel like I'll peak at state, rather than at sectionals," she said. "I feel like I still have time to drop. I don't know how much time, but I feel there are areas I could improve in."

"My transitions could have been better at sectionals and (so could) some of my race strategies. My 200 IM was a little bit slower on the backstroke, and I was slower on the breaststroke."

But individual goals aren't the only things on McKeehan's mind today.

She wants to do her part to help the Trojans achieve their team objective of placing in the top five in the standings.

"This year, (we) have a good shot of becoming a top-five team, so that's really exciting to have that opportunity," McKeehan said. "We have a couple of relays that have a shot at getting in the top three. That hasn't happened in a while."

"It's exciting because we have a shot at scoring higher than we have for a long time."

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA state swimming and diving championships

Where: Indiana University Natatorium on IUPUI campus, 901 W. New York St., Indianapolis

When: Today. Diving prelims and semifinals at 9 a.m.; consolation and finals at 1 p.m.

Admission: \$8 per session; \$12 for both days

Lancers advance to title game

Edinburgh's top scorer falls ill in second half

By KEN SEVERSON

DAILY JOURNAL SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

SHELBYVILLE

Edinburgh rallied from a 14-point deficit Friday night to beat Morristown 44-38 in the semifinals of the Class A Southwestern (Shelby) girls basketball sectional.

That was the good news for the Lancers.

The bad news is that junior Heather Dowell, the game's leading scorer, left the game early in

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NEXT UP

Edinburgh (5-16) vs. Waldron (12-9) in Class A Southwestern (Shelby) Sectional final, 7:30 tonight.

the fourth quarter with breathing difficulties.

Her availability for tonight's championship final against Waldron was unknown at press time.

Dowell has sat out a few recent games for health reasons.

White was thrilled with the win but was more concerned about his player's health.

"Heather was having trouble breathing again, and her heart was pounding," White said. "She was having a great game, but right now our focus is on her."

As for the game, Edinburgh (5-16) wasn't focused early on when it fell behind 17-4, thanks largely to poor shooting.

But after a timeout, the Lancers regrouped and methodically worked their way back into contention against an opponent they beat during the regular season.

"We weren't playing well at all,

and quickly we had to decide if the seniors wanted this," White said. "We were just throwing shots up, but once they decided to be patient, they discovered that shots will fall in the basket."

Dowell, who missed her first five 3-point shots, finally found the mark with two in the third quarter along with one by senior teammate Hannah Basey.

But it wasn't until the 4:24 mark of the fourth quarter that Edinburgh took its first lead. The Lancers sealed the win by making 15 free throws in the final period.

"Lately we've been practicing (free throws) before and after practice," said Basey, who was 7 of 8 from the line.

"From what I was told, that's

only (sectional) win No. 2 in the history of Edinburgh girls basketball," White said. "I haven't had the chance to research it, but right now I'm so proud of these girls."

"We had several chances to fold, but they wouldn't hear of it. They did a great job in the second half."

Dowell led all scorers with 16 points. Basey added 10.

Morristown (2-18) was led by junior Chelsey Carlton's 14 points. Sophomore Melissa Tillison had 12.

The Lancers look forward to playing for a championship.

"We're going into this game like any other," Basey said. "But now we have a lot to be motivated about."

Braves small in number but excel on mat

By JOHN GROTH

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Indian Creek High School has Johnson County's smallest wrestling team. But when it comes to individual postseason production, the Braves are a county giant.

In any given dual meet, the Braves have from 10 to 14 wrestlers. More often than not, they have to forfeit at least three weight classes.

But the Braves who do take the mat are not only formidable, they are tournament-caliber. For proof, consider this: Indian Creek advanced nine wrestlers to the regionals. Of that, four qualified for today's Evansville Reitz Individual Semistate.

That's two more than Center Grove, the county's largest school, and one more than Whiteland, an area power. Only No. 6 Franklin has more semistate qualifiers. The Grizzly Cubs have eight.

Indian Creek's representatives are seniors Jared Kipper (140 pounds), Michael Grant (145) and Evan Lattimore (275) and junior Kyle Horton (152).

Today marks the third straight year the Braves have sent at least four wrestlers to the semistate.

For that, first-year coach Chris Severns credits the foundation laid by predecessor Josh Edwards, who stepped down at the end of last season and still helps out in an advisory role.

"I knew when I was coming in that Josh Edwards ran a pretty good program," said Severns,



GRANT



HORTON



KIPPER



LATTIMORE

who coached at Bedford-North Lawrence last year. "My goal was to keep it going and to increase the numbers."

"I thought it was definitely something we could achieve."

Severns insists the success wouldn't be possible without the help of his assistant coaches.

Midway through the season, Severns thought he wasn't giving wrestlers enough individual attention. He was the only coach in the wrestling room and couldn't work with every wrestler one-on-one during practice.

So in January, he turned to Edwards for help. He also brought on board volunteer assistant coaches John Denien and Keith Grant.

The extra individual instruction has paid off.

"We try to focus on the kids individually more and correct individual problems," said Severns, who teaches social studies at Indian Creek Middle School. "We divide them up and give each wrestler individual attention."

"It's like the smaller classroom theory."

Wrestlers appreciate the approach.

"Coach Severns has mixed up our practice style a little more. Along with our previous coach helping out, it keeps a wide abundance of knowledge around," Kipper said. "They've helped me with my conditioning, wrestling from my feet and takedowns."

Two of the Braves' semistate qualifiers have been there before.

Lattimore advanced to semistate last year at 275, while Kipper qualified in 2004 at 125. Both lost first-round matches.

Lattimore (37-4) has benefited from the Braves' increased conditioning and more intense drilling in practices.

"There's drilling, but more of it. We keep doing the same things over and over," Lattimore said. "It's helped me get in better shape. Now moves come more naturally. I don't even have to think about it."

Some wrestlers, including Grant (36-4), go an extra mile.

Fifteen minutes after a recent practice, Grant was still working on takedowns. Coaches told him they were mediocre. He wants to make them better.

"The coaches have been there as a helping hand," Grant said.

What: IHSAA individual wrestling semistate

When: Today

Where: Evansville Reitz Memorial High School at Roberts Stadium

Time: Wrestling begins at 9:30 a.m.; semifinals at 2 p.m.; finals at 5 p.m.

Cost: \$8 for all sessions; \$6 for final session only

Advancement: The top four placers in each weight class at the semistate advance to the Feb. 17 and 18 state finals at Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis

Local wrestlers

(weight class in parenthesis)

Franklin Community High School: Jordan Fish (112 pounds), Brad Gallagher (119), Danny Cooper (125), Jae VanHorn (130), Cord Dorsey (135), Michael Reese (160), Phil Glasser (171), Cody Johnson (215)

Indian Creek High School: Jared Kipper (140), Michael Grant (145), Kyle Horton (152), Evan Lattimore (275)

Whiteland Community High School: Matt Fields (112), Caleb VanDeman (215), Travis Thomas (275)

Center Grove High School: Andrew Schifeling (119), Blake Harvey (130)

"They've encouraged us and push us. They got a feel of what we could do and worked off that."

For Horton and Grant, the semistate is a new experience.

Horton (27-6) placed third at the Mooresville individual regional. He defeated Center Grove freshman Shelby Mappes (30-9), avenging a loss to him at the sectional.

"Mentally, I told myself I could do it," Horton said. "If I keep wrestling like I did in regionals, I can keep going. It's all in my mind-set."

Before this year, the furthest Grant had advanced was the first round of regionals. He expects to go considerably deeper into the postseason this time.

"I feel I'm almost where I need to be," Grant said. "I've got just as good a shot as anyone. It all depends on whoever wants it bad."

I'm more excited than nervous.

"(The state meet) has always been a goal. I would really like to make it to state."

Severns' next goal for the Braves is to increase the size of the team and become more of a force in the team tournament.

"Overall, as a team, we aren't where I'd like us to be," Severns said. "This shows where we need to get as a team."

"Within two years, I'd like to have 30 kids."

But he has no complaints about sending four wrestlers to the semistate.

"It's a good individual accomplishment," Severns said. "I'd like to advance eight to 10 in the future. That's an ideal situation."

"With the quality of our wrestlers, I don't see that to be too much of a problem."

• Trojans

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Sophomore Jordan Price led the way with 18. Lauck had 14, junior Alex Hawkins had 13, and senior Traci Lippold added 11.

Double-figure scoring notwithstanding, defense paved the way.

Although the Trojans led 43-29 at half-time, Lentz still wasn't particularly pleased with their defense. He wanted players to move more quickly to the ball and stop penetration in the lane.

So in the second half, the Trojans turned up the defensive heat.

Southport (7-14) hurried shots in the second half. On the night, the Cardinals made only 17 of 56 (30.3 percent) shots from the field.

Southport coach Denise McClanahan was frustrated with her team's lack of patience to start the third quarter. On six straight possessions, the Cardinals put up shots after only one pass.

They missed all six.

"That played right into Center Grove's hands. They're a run-and-gun team,"



STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/
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Center Grove senior Traci Lippold, right, fights for a loose ball with Southport's Emily Duckworth during the first half of Friday's sectional game.

McClanahan said. "We let Center Grove's physical play dictate what we do. Our game plan was to be patient. But we didn't do that."

"It's frustrating to come out in the third quarter and be flat."

Junior Sarah Bassler was the only Cardinals player in double figures. She had 19 points but made only 6 of 22

attempts from the field.

"This game gives us a good look to see if we can be competitive next year," McClanahan said. "Center Grove is deep. It showed our players they need to improve and become strong and fast against teams like Center Grove."

Depth was also a key for the Trojans.

Price came off the bench to spark the Trojans in the first half, scoring 12 points. She made two 3-pointers and provided quickness on defense.

Hawkins, another reserve, cleaned up on the boards. She had a game-high 10 rebounds, helping the Trojans out-rebound the Cardinals 47-29.

"(Price) provided a spark for us," Lentz said. "She provides speed, and that's what we want in our games. When it's a slow game, it's nice to turn to her. Hawkins also had a great game."

Center Grove enters tonight's final on a three-game winning streak. Lentz said the Trojans should be able to build on the momentum they created down the stretch against Southport.

"Our defense played really well in the second half," Lentz said. "I liked our hustle and focus. We played very well at both ends of the floor, and hopefully we'll keep riding the momentum."

• Short

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Jessica Huffman, who finished the night with a game-high 21 points. But Huffman made only 5 of 18 field-goal attempts.

"(Huffman and Reed) were trading baskets back and forth," Sweeney said. "They were two big-time players making big-time plays. It was fun to watch. There was counterpunch after counterpunch."

Whiteland sophomore Sarah Condra, who finished the game with 18 points on 5-of-10 shooting from behind the 3-point line, hit a 3-pointer with 5:12 remaining in the game to give Whiteland a 58-55 lead.

But the Warriors could not hit free throws in the closing minutes, hitting just 2 of 6 from the charity stripe.

"We missed some free throws at key times in the game," Whiteland coach Bill Hogue said. "If we knock them down, we put pressure on Chatard."

The season was not a total bust for the Warriors, as they matched their win



STAFF PHOTO BY MATT OOLEY/mooley@thejournalnet.com

The Whiteland student cheering section shows its spirit before Friday's sectional game against Chatard at Beech Grove. The Warriors' season ended with a 62-60 loss to the Trojans.

total from last year. And they were state-ranked for the first time in the history of the program.

"Even in defeat, we have done a lot with girls basketball at Whiteland," Hogue said. "We have the offseason and 20 regular-season games for this. Our mission from last year was to win the sectional."

"Even though we got better, we still

felt short. I thanked the seniors but challenged the underclassmen to take off next year where we left off."

Anne Boese had 19 points, and Kelly Gardner had 14 points and 16 rebounds for Chatard.

Chatard will play Roncalli (11-11), which beat Beech Grove 62-28 on Friday night, for the sectional championship at 7:30 p.m. tonight at Beech Grove.

Rebuilding will help Braves in 2006-07 season

On Tuesday we played in a sectional quarterfinal at Triton Central. It was not supposed to be our final game.

When we entered the gym to play Park Tudor, something was terribly wrong with our team, either emotionally or physically. Though I cannot put my finger on our deficiency, I know this: We should have beaten the Panthers. I have no doubt.

Sluggish and unfocused from the tip, we struggled to hit open shots and failed to capitalize on golden opportunities. Ultimately, our lack of mental focus caused our demise.

This is far from the way that we had hoped to end our season. However, with defeat comes knowledge. It matters to us not that this knowledge exists. Rather, it matters what we decide to do with it.

Someone once told me that after making a mistake, one can animate, or one can deflate. It is a choice that can make or break the strength of a person's character, or a team's in this case.

I wholeheartedly believe that my team will animate, and we will become stronger. Many considered this to be a rebuilding year for us, and they were right. However, it is over, and I see no reason to dwell on an excuse any longer.

In my mind, we have rebuilt. Our progress will only be furthered during the offseason, and it will be very evident next year.

Because our season has ended, this is my final sports diary entry. I would like to thank our coaching staff and the Indian Creek High School administration, especially Mr. Tim Robison, for allowing me the opportunity to represent my team.

Thanks also to the Daily Journal sports staff and to all those who have given me inspiration in the past few months.

This has been a great experience, and I will never forget it.

Courtney Von Stein is a junior on the Indian Creek High School girls basketball team. Her Winter Sports Diaries appeared each week in the Daily Journal.

Courtney Von Stein

WINTER SPORTS DIARY

