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First state tourney win

Lady Jackets down Sheldon Clark

By Leah Shewby
NICHOLAS—The first round of the Girls Sweet Sixteen would prove to be a Nicholas County milestone as the Lady Jackets claimed win number 30 over the Sheldon Clark Lady Cardinals, marking the first state tournament win for any Nicholas County basketball team.

Before an attendance of 5,065 spectators, of whom an estimated 3,000 were clad in Nicholas County blue, the Lady Jackets claimed a 49-30 victory over the Sheldon Clark Cardinals, a seven-time veteran of the state girls basketball team.

Though Nicholas was favored to claim the win in the first round game, the Lady Cardinals could not be overlooked. In each of their seven appearances in the state tournament, the 15th region champion Lady Cardinals had never made it past the first round. Nicholas, one of three teams making their first ever appearance, was at a disadvantage by virtue of their lack of experience in state tournament play.

This was an advantage Sheldon Clark could capitalize on, a very good chance of finally making it into the final eight for the first time in their history.

However, right from tip-off, it was obvious the bulk of the game would be defense.

Jackie Hatten, of Sheldon, took in the first points after Nikki Smoot's first shot outside the key just short of the net.

The first five points of the game were made from the charity stripe as the Cardinals defense were raised on four fouls within the span of a minute.

Point guard Christie Hatten ripped the ball away from the Cardinals and boosted Nicholas to a 5-2 lead. But the Lady Cardinals sharpshooter, Jennie Kirk, came back and launched a stunning three pointer from the key top to knot the game at 5-5.

Smoot forced another Cardinals turnover, but missed the shot. Terry Earlywine rebound and put the ball back through to begin a Lady Jackets run.

The Lady Jackets lost the lead temporarily with four straight points from the Lady Cardinals, but it was to be for the last time. Smoot continued to frustrate the Lady Cardinals, scoring off another steal to end the quarter ahead 11-0.

At the top of the second quarter, the Lady Cardinals tied the game at 11-11.

But after a slow start from Kim DeKins, the sophomore dug in and pulled Nicholas back to the lead from there it was all Nicholas

County. Elizabeth Schandling added another steal to her record, but scoring remained frustrating for her. For the scores, Nicholas relied on a team effort. Smoot, finding no room inside, fired outside to Hatten for the bucket.

Then Earlywine, in a scramble for the loose ball, found Hatten open on the inside. The last score of Nicholas 12-0 second quarter run belonged to a double pass combination between Smoot and DeKins for a 23-11 lead.

At the half, Nicholas was firmly in control, 23-11. Though showing control on the offensive boards, the Lady Jackets defense had logged six steals in the half. They had scored 11 points off turnovers.

The second half belonged entirely to Nicholas County, although Sheldon Clark was making an effort to come back. Throughout the course of the third quarter, the Lady Cardinals kept within 10 points of the Jackets.

However, at the 8:19 mark, the Lady Cardinals game was sent a serious blow when top offensive shooter Kirk accidentally stepped on a rolling ball and injured her foot. She left the game with nine points.

Afterwards the Jackets' momentum was a 24-21 lead entering the final eight minutes.

In the fourth, Nicholas County dominated the Lady Cardinals of score.

Hatten, in a standout game, highlighted the fourth with an old fashioned three point play.

In the final seconds, Nicholas County fans got to take a look at the bright future of the Lady Jackets squad as the bench walked on the court to finish the last two minutes of the game.

Alicia Silbert knocked off both sides of her foul shots to post Nicholas County's last score of the game for a 49-30 victory.

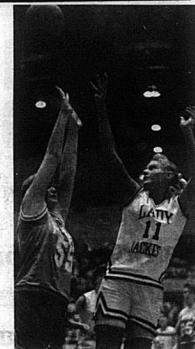
Kim DeKins led scoring with 17 points and four blocked shots, Christie Hatten left the arena with 17 points to her credit, three assists, and three steals. Sophomore Nikki Smoot checked up eight points and two assists. Terry Earlywine went up for four points and three steals and Kristi Barton left with one point and one steal.

From the bench, Elizabeth Schandling brought in two points and four steals against the Cardinals and Alicia Silbert came in with two points to round out the Lady Jackets effort.

"You can see where our strength lies. It's defense," Head Coach Barbara Kenney said following the game.

"Offensively, we're blessed with a good inside and outside game and once we were able to get control, I think the girls were able to overcome their inexperience on the court and played well."

"I'm very proud of how well our bench performed. They did the things I needed them to do coming out on the court and it's clear we're going to be strong coming in next year."



The Carlisle Mercury/Pam Bowles Photo

Renee Liville goes up for a jumper over Kristi Schuckenburg of Mary in the quarterfinal of the Great low Nikki Smoot tops a shot over Jackie Hatten of Sheldon Clark on Thursday afternoon in the first round of the state tournament.



The Carlisle Mercury/Pam Bowles Photo
 Christie Hatten and Kim DeKins (from left to right) see in the interview room after the Nicholas County Sheldon Clark first round game of the state tournament. The press interviewed Hatten, DeKins and Coach Barbara Kenney after the Sheldon Clark game and Kenney and Renee Liville was reinterviewed after the Merry game.

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