

## Lady Jackets pluck Cardinals for 10th win

By Josh Shepherd

10th regional team.

**PARIS** — With 37 left to go in the girls 10th region championship game, sophomore Elizabeth Schanding found herself in a familiar predicament. During practice, she would stand at the free throw line and her teammates would tell her this was it, the winning shot of the 10th region tournament.

Last Sunday afternoon when she went to the key for two charity tones it was for real.

The Jackets led by one, 19-18. In a game where the average score per quarter was five points, a three point lead was equal to a game shifter.

Each of Schanding's shots caught all net.

Kim Denkins sealed the Jackets victory 15 seconds later with two more free throws for a 23-18 victory.

Those final four shots marked the Lady Jackets first ever 10th region championship and unseated 10th region powerhouse Clark County. For five years the George Rogers Clark Lady Cardinals had never known defeat at the hands of another 10th region team.

In the final game of the regular season the Lady Jackets suffered their worst defeat by the Lady Cardinals, 41-23.

"You're in the big leagues now," was one reported sarcastic comment after that game. On Sunday, March 16, 1992, the Lady Jackets proved without a doubt exactly which 10th region team was "big league."

Both teams operated very deliberately on the court, using whatever time was necessary to penetrate the defense and make the good shot. If it took minutes to find the seam inside, each team took the time to get it.

It was a full minute before any score appeared on the board, after a mad scramble for the ball. Kristi Barton came up with it, mugged it to Tina Earlywine who dumped it off to Kim Denkins for the score 2-0, Nicholas.

Clark's Lucy Beck nailed a jumper to tie the game at 2-2 after two minutes of work on the shot.

Returning to Nicholas County's end of the court, Hutton fed the ball to Denkins who sent a jump shot sliding neatly through the net to take another Nicholas County lead.

Clark County ended the first quarter before the clock had gone under a minute with one shooter, Stephany Davis pocketing four straight points within seconds of each other, the final one on a steal. The Cardinals led by two, 6-4, at the end of one.

Earlywine stepped up to the charity stripe and sank one of two free throws to pull the Lady Jackets within one. But it was Denkins' reverse inside that gave the jackets their boost to the lead.

With one score over Carri Conkewright's outstretched hands, Denkins went to the foul line with 5:05 left in

the half to bring home two more for a 6-Jackets lead.

Beck powered one inside to cut the Jackets back to one, but two points was all Clark County would score in the second.

With 08.8 seconds left, Hutton belted down the court for a last chance drive. She made it clear to the basket, but the shot popped off the rim and into Denkins' hands. Denkins' shot caught net for an 11-8 lead at half-time.

The second half commenced with no obvious change in either team's strategy. But in the process of two minutes, the tables had turned against the Jackets. Beck lobbed in four points and Conkewright continued the run from the middle for a drawn out 6-0 run on the scoreboard for a 14-11 lead.

Then Nicholas County went to work. Hutton rebounded her own lay up and sent it back through for two. Then Earlywine slipped a pass into Denkins for an additional two points for a 16-14 lead after three.

In the fourth quarter, defensive quickness proved a key to the game. From the Nicholas County ranks came Schanding.

She struck quickly, stealing the ball one but called for walking as she reced down court. On her next steal, she stole on each mistake, riling in a running lay up that set the Nicholas County fans in fire with a 17-14 lead.

The Cardinals, however, never said die as Conkewright stepped up and took Clark back to within one.

At 1:40, Stephany Davis bombed from the outside and sent her target, throwing the Jackets behind, 18-17, and it was Clark County's turn to cheer. They had exactly 21 seconds to celebrate.

The Jackets broke into a run and gun with three hitting Denkins on the inside. She rebounded her own missed lay up and put Nicholas on top for good.

Four final shots later, the scoreboard read 23-18, Jackets, as a raging tide of Nicholas County fans flooded the court. Not only was it the first regional championship the Lady Jackets had ever won, it was the first regional championship Nicholas County had won since the 1957 Bluejackets.

Denkins left the court with 16 points, Schanding checked up four points and four steals, followed by Hutton with two points and Earlywine with one.

"It was the best defense the girls have ever played," Lady Jackets Head Coach Barbara Kenney said.

"Clark came into this game and respected our defense and didn't pretend. We knew we had to be patient and not take bad shots and our side did just what needed to be done."

"Every member of this team has contributed to this season's successful efforts. Not a single player was expendable."

"I've been coaching here for 18 years

and, though it has had its rough spots, I always hoped someday people would respect Nicholas County."

"It used to be when the district drawing was held, people would be glad they drew Nicholas, but not now. We are the winners, now."

"I can't begin to describe the feeling I have sitting on the bench and seeing all the cheering blue and white in the stands."

"Our team had to beat the best to get to the sweet sixteen. Clark was ranked 12th in the state, has been to the state finals two out of the last three years, and went five straight years without being to a 10th region team. This win proves we can beat the best teams around because we are one of the best teams around," Kenney said.

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Above: Elizabeth Schanding loses control on the court as fans flood the Bourbon County Gym at the end of the 10th Region Championship game between the Lady Jackets and the Clark County Cardinals. Schanding has good reason to celebrate after her defensive performance in the fourth quarter. Below: Barbara Kenney receives an ecstatic hug from her sister, Peggy, at the first celebration of Kenney's first region victory as coach of the Lady Jackets.



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