

**SPORTS**

**First state tourney win  
Lady Jackets down Sheldon Clark**

**By Josh Shepley**  
The Carle Mercury Staff

**BRIMMOND** — The first round of the Carle Sweet Sixteen would prove to be a Nicholas County milestone as the Lady Jackets claimed victory 30 over the Sheldon Clark 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 Sweet Sixteen.

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, as every 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 Hartless, of Sheldon, took to the first points after Nikki Smoot's first shot outside, fell just short of the net.

The first five points of the game were made from the charity stripe

as the Cardinals defense were called 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 6-2 lead. But the Lady Cardinals sharpshooter, Jenae Kirk, came back and launched a stunning three pointer from the key to knot the game at 5-5.

Smoot forced another Cardinals turnover, but missed the shot. Tary Earlywise 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, 19-9.

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

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

Elizabeth Schending added another steal to her record, but soon found resistance from the Lady Cardinals.

For the scores, Nicholas relied on a team effort. Smoot, finished on seven inside, fired outside to Hatten for the basket.

Then Earlywise, in a scramble for the loose ball, found Hatten open on the inside.

The last score of Nicholas 12-10 second quarter put belonged to a double pass combination between Smoot and Denkins for a 23-11

lead.

Throughout the course of the third quarter, the Lady Cardinals kept within 10 points of the Jackets.

However, at the 3:19 mark, the Lady Cardinals game was won as 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 moved to a 34-21 lead entering the final eight minute.

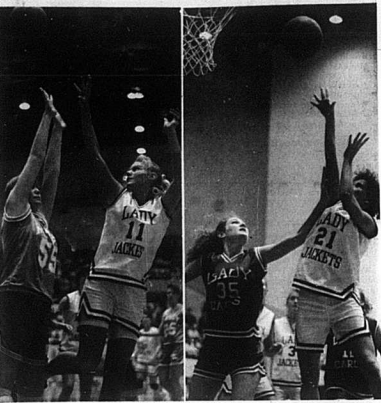
In the fourth, Nicholas County dominated the Lady Cardinals offense.

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 as squad as the bench walked on the court to finish the last two minutes of the game.

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

Kim Denkins led scoring with 17 points and four blocked shots. Christie Hatten left the arena with 17 points in her credit, three assists, and three steals. Speedster Smoot and Denkins for a 23-11



Renee Liville goes up for a jumper over 6'3" Kristie Stuckenburg of Mercy in the quarterfinals of the Sweet Sixteen tournament Friday night, pictured to the left. Right, Nikki Smoot fires up a shot over Jackie Hartless of Sheldon Clark on Thursday afternoon in the first round of the state tournament.

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**Lady Jackets**



The Carle Mercury Staff Photos  
Christie Hatten and Kim Denkins pictured from left to right are in the interview room after the Nicholas County Sheldon Clark first round game of the state tournament. The press interviewed Hatten, Denkins and Coach Barbara Kenney after the Sheldon Clark game and Kenney and Renee Liville was interviewed after the Mercy game.

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Nikki Smoot checked up eight points and two assists. They Early wise went up for four points and three steals and Kristi Barton left with one point and one steal.

From the bench, Elizabeth Schending brought in two points and four steals against the Cardinals and Alicia Short 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.

"Obviously, 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 Carle Mercury Staff Photos  
Christie Hatten fires up a jumper over Nicholas County's first state tournament victory over Sheldon Clark in the State tournament game on Thursday afternoon.

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