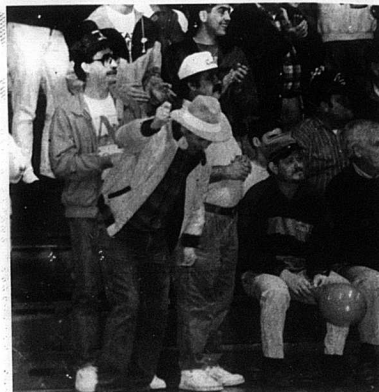


## NICHOLAS COUNTY LADY JACKETS CLAIM STATE HOOP CROWN



Kenny Smoot enjoys the championship pep session at NCHS Sunday by doing a little jig to the music the Lady Jackets danced about to on stage. He looked almost as happy as they did as he joined them in the celebration.



Thank You Barbara!

Barbara Kenney is awarded a gorgeous bouquet of flowers by Boosters Club President Linda Linville at the championship pep session. Everyone who spoke of Kenney at the rally thanked her for making this year one of the most if not the most memorable years Nicholas County has ever had.

*I had a dream... and it came true. -- Barbara Kenney*

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## NICHOLAS COUNTY LADY JACKETS CLAIM STATE HOOP CROWN

# Jackets down number one ranked Clay County to advance to finals

By Rebecca Mullins  
OF THE CARLISLE MERCURY STAFF  
FRANKFORT — The number one ranked team in the state fell down a couple of runs on the ladder of success Saturday morning in the semi-finals of the Girl's Sweet Sixteen.

The Clay County Tigrettes, who have made nine Sweet 16 appearances and won the state title in 1989, fell out of the tournament at the hands of the Lady Jackets as Nicholas captured a berth in the state finals with a 37-31 victory.

Clay County's faithful was not at all happy about losing to Nicholas County, as the Tigrettes stern, tear-stained faces after the match showed.

In the press interview room after the game, player Angela Gray was asked by one reporter if she was happy about her success in the season which had lifted her and her team up to be a very intimidating team in girls' high-school basketball.

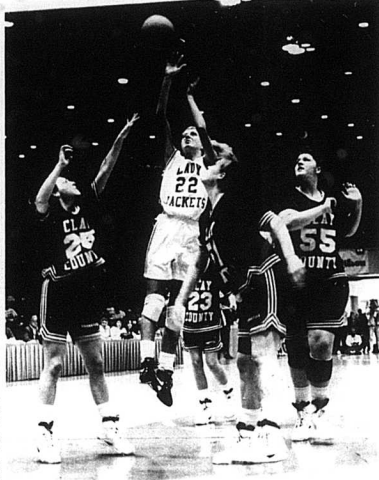
"Well, I guess, but..." Gray said before she broke into tears and rested her head on Head Coach Donnie Gray's shoulder.

Donnie Gray said there was only one way Nicholas won the match; with free throws.

Clay County did manage to score 10 more points in field goals than Nicholas. Clay shot had a field-goal percentage of 29 percent to Nicholas' 25 percent at game's end.

Nicholas' game free-throw percentage was 73 as compared to Clay County's 57 percent.

"When we keep taking the ball inside and never get to the free-throw line, something's wrong," Gray



Christie Hutton jumps in the middle of Clay's Angela Gray, Vonda Jackson and Les Dezarn in the first quarter to make a shot jumper and score a hit. It was a little later in this quarter when Jackson fractured Hutton's jaw with an elbow jab, but Hutton persevered to help the Lady Jackets beat the team out of the Sweet 16.

said in an interview session after the game.

"It all came down to free throws."

Lady Jackets' Head Coach Barbara Kenney had another opinion about the match.

"Clay County is slow. You know, they're big kids and they're slow," Kenney said.

"I just wanted to keep it close because I was hoping I could lift them."

"We told the kids, 'Run them when you can. We didn't care what the score was. I thought the kids showed so much patience.'"

Patience, and good sportsmanship, was the key to the Lady Jackets' win.

Even after Christie Hutton got elbowed in the jaw by both Vonda Jackson and Amanda Reid in two separate quarters of the game, yet returned after a short rest on the bench to play out the end of the game — the Jackets continued.

It was discovered later, after she was taken to King's Daughters' Hospital, Hutton had suffered a broken jaw in the game.

"I ran into her [Vonda Jackson's] elbow. It knocked my jaw over. I heard something crack," Hutton said after the game as she held a bag of ice to her left cheek.

Barbara Kenney took Hutton to the doctor in Lexington Monday to have the jaw looked at.

Losing the game was emotionally tough on Clay County, as Gray also said in the interview session, but it was physically and emotionally tough on Nicholas County.

Several times during the game, both teams' fans were wondering who was going to be the winner. The teams were tied or within a two-point margin of each other throughout the entire game until the end of the fourth quarter.

Because of the defensive action in the match, the game's pace was very slow. The score at the end of the first quarter was 4-2 with Clay County in the lead.

At 6:45 in the first quarter, Nicholas scored the first two points of the game. Clay County caught up at 6:21, however, when Leslie Miller connected twice at the free-throw line and Tigrette Angie Sandlin hit one from the line to give the Tigrettes a 3-2 lead.

Sandlin was fouled again at the end of the first quarter and scored a point from the charity stripe.

Nicholas County's Kim Denkins was fouled by Clay's Vonda Jackson at 7:28 in the second and connected twice at the charity line. The score was tied 4-4.

At 6:31, Jackson sprinted past Hutton and scored on a short jumper at the baseline. While headed toward the goal, Elizabeth Jackson's elbow. It Schanding fouled Clay's 6-foot, 200-pound player heard something crack," Hutton said after the game as she held a bag of ice to her left cheek.

The score was tied once again at 5:39 when Hutton hit a long jumper. Clay's Les Dezarn avenged Hutton's score with a two-point basket in the paint at 5:30. Clay was once again in the lead 10-8.

At 4:56, Denkins connected twice at the free-throw line after being fouled by Jackson. At 2:58, Hutton nailed one in the bucket to give the Jackets to

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