

State champs sorry to see season end

By Bill Parker
staff writer

Detroit Country Day basketball coach Kurt Keener didn't want the 1988-89 boys basketball season to come to an end. After all, his team enjoyed a 25-3 season (including a 20-0 record) and capped it off last weekend at Ann Arbor's Crisler Arena by winning the Class C state championship. But it wasn't so much the win/loss record that impressed Keener. It was the fact that the Yellow Jackets were playing at the top of their ability.

"You work all year to play up to your potential," explained Keener. "Some teams reach that plateau and some teams don't. At the end of the season we were playing as well as we could possibly play. All the parts were working to perfection. As a coach, I couldn't have been happier. I didn't want the season to end. Let's play another month."

ALTHOUGH KEENER wanted to play more basketball, DCD's opponents over the year were probably happy the season has ended. The Yellow Jackets finished the regular season with a 17-3 record. Country Day's only losses were to ranked Class A teams. They lost to Detroit Pershing, 49-46, Ferris, 63-61, and Saginaw, 56-53.

"As an independent (school) we try to play top quality opponents," Keener said. "I think the Saginaw game was the critical turning point of our season. Although we lost, we knew after that game that we could play with a top Class A school. Coming into the state (Class C) tournament our level of confidence was unbelievable."

Country Day won eight straight games in the state tournament by an average of 24 points.

DCD's closest tournament victory was a 78-75 win over Morenci in the opening round of the regional. Their largest margin of victory in the tournament was a 39-point, 82-43, triumph over Ishpeming in the championship game.

COUNTRY DAY'S offense, led by sophomore Chris Webber, averaged 69 points per game throughout the season. Although Webber was the only Yellow Jacket to average double figures for the season — averaging 25.3 points, 12.3 rebounds and 5.1 blocks per game — the Jackets had balanced scoring in both games of the state finals.

In the semifinals, Webber finished with 25 points, 11 boards and two blocks leading DCD to a 75-53 victory over Cassopolis. Iyapo Montgomery (averaging 9.5 ppg) scored 16 and Myron Potter (averaging 6.4 ppg) scored 15. In the finals, Webber finished with 25 points, 16 rebounds and four blocks, Potter scored 15 points, Kurt Bloomhuff scored 13 and Montgomery chipped in with 10.

"They have a very nice supporting cast," admitted Ishpeming coach Tom Russo. "They shared the ball well. They spread it out and took the shots when they presented themselves."

BUT DON'T give all the credit to DCD's explosive offense. The defense also played exceptionally well, especially in the finals where they forced numerous turnovers and rarely gave up an uncontested shot.

Cassopolis entered the semifinals averaging 79.4 points per game. DCD held them to 53. Ishpeming entered the championship game averaging 79.5 points and were held to just 43, including 14 in the entire second half.

"A lot of people focus on offense, but we take great pride in our defense," Keener said. "Both Cassopolis and Ishpeming were averaging around 80 points all year and we held them both well below their averages."

Credit the defense with forcing Cassopolis into 23 turnovers and limiting the Rangers to just 17-46 shooting from the floor. Ishpeming gave up 23 turnovers and shot just 16-44-46 from the floor.

KEENER was quick to point out that he had a lot of help over the year from assistant coaches Jay Schwartz and Kerry Keener.

"Both Jay and Kerry have great experience and brought youthful insight to the coaching staff," Keener said. "The coaches and the kids related with each other real well. My coaches were a great asset to the team. It was really a super, fantastic season."

And the future looks great, too. The Yellowjackets only lose two seniors, Slovis and Paul Wasson, to graduation. Only Slovis was a starter.

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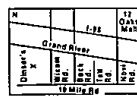
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