

Poor shooting puts Franklin on sideline

By Brad Emons
staff writer

Livonia Franklin found a lid on the basket last week, falling to Taylor Center in the Class A regional girls final at Dearborn Edsel Ford, 43-39.

The Patriots finished the season at 19-4 overall, their best-ever girls record.

Meanwhile, Taylor Center (24-1) moves on to the state quarterfinals Wednesday at Southfield. The Lady Rams will take on West Bloomfield (22-3).

Franklin fought tooth and nail with the much taller and stouter Lady Rams, but two free throws by Wendy Jamula with 44 seconds to go sealed the victory for Taylor Center.

Ironically, Jamula, the team's top scorer with more than 2,000 career points, was held without a field goal. The 5-foot-10 point-guard, however, hit eight of 10 free throws.

Tila Thomas, a 5-11 senior, led Taylor Center with 16, while 6-2 center Jennifer Miller added 10.

Three Patriots scored in double figures. Leading the way was junior forward Julian Stesiak, who netted 13. Dawn Warner and Cheryl Hintz added 12 and 11, respectively.

FRANKLIN was plagued by poor shooting, making only 15 of 48 shots from the floor.

"Basically what it boiled down to is that we missed shots that we normally make," said Franklin coach Dan Freeman. "And it happened in both halves."

"I said to myself, 'keep taking them' because they're eventually going to go, but the shots kept rolling around and went off. The other parts of our game were there, but we just didn't finish off the shots."

Despite the poor shooting, Franklin was tied 8-8 after one quarter, 21-11 at the half and trailed by only two after three quarters, 32-30.

Stesiak's basket with 3:57 left in the game tied it at 35-31, but the Patriots scored only four points down the stretch.

A layup by Miller with three minutes to go gave Taylor Center a 37-35 lead.

Franklin then lost out on a crucial possession with 2:49 to play when Hintz took a short turn around baseline jumper that was blocked by the 6-2 Miller.

"Confusion arose whether the Rams center had committed a foul or whether the Patriots had called timeout prior to the block."

AFTER A BRIEF huddle, officials ruled that the Patriots illegally signaled timeout while the ball

was being passed in the air to Hintz. Although it appeared Franklin retained possession, officials ruled it a jump ball.

With the arrow pointing Taylor Center's way, the Rams took the ball out of bounds and capitalized on the turnover by sending Jamula to the line.

She made both free throws with 2:41 to play to put the Rams up four, 39-35.

"Although the pass was in the air, I thought we still maintained possession," said Freeman. "I was signaling timeout because I wanted to run an inbound play that I thought we could score off of. To me that was the turning point."

Another turning point came when Franklin's senior center, Shannon Eberly, picked up three fouls in the first half.

She drew a fourth in the third quarter and eventually fouled out without scoring a point.

Miller also spent time on the bench, picking up her fourth midway through the third quarter.

"IT WAS A big plus that Jennifer was able to play in the fourth quarter," said Taylor Center coach Mike Leever. "I thought about putting her back in with five minutes to go, but I put her in with six and it worked out."

Although the Patriots couldn't find the rim, they played outstanding defense, led by sophomore point guard Patty Shea, who was giving up five inches to Jamula.

"For the size differential, the girls did very well," said the Franklin coach. "Patty did a nice job on Wendy. She also was able to help out and do a reasonable job on Miller. We did a decent job taking away their perimeter game."

"But they (Taylor Center) have a lot of talent, and you can't key on one person."

Leever was surprised to hear afterward that Jamula had been held without a field goal.

"That's all right as long as she can get the ball to our post players — Jennifer and Tila," said the Taylor Center coach. "The girls were a little nervous, but with Wendy being the veteran she is, she kept her poise. She also came through for us with some big free throws."

LEEVER SAID team defense has been the difference in Taylor Center's last three state tournament wins over Dearborn Fordson, Detroit Northwestern and Franklin.

"That's what pulled us through," he said. "We knew about Dawn (Warner) and we had to contain her. We played her straight up, and then went some zone because we knew she could put it up (shots) anytime she wants."

Chiefs capture regional title

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Jenny Russell couldn't say whether she had scored a career-high number of points or not Wednesday night.

She didn't care. It really didn't matter. The important fact was Russell's 12 points were vital to Plymouth Canton winning its first regional championship in girls basketball.

Russell and Susan Ferko, who scored a game-high 22, combined to lead the Chiefs to a 48-40 victory over tournament host Trenton.

"I was really glad that my career high is," said Russell, a point guard averaging three points per game. "They've been telling me to shoot the ball, and the opportunities were there and I went with it."

Russell, who usually makes an impact with her defense and ball-handling skills, did have a career-high point total, and 11 came in the second half to help Canton take control of the contest.

THE NO. 9-RATED Chiefs, 21-3, will play No. 3 Benton Harbor in a Class A quarterfinal game at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at Jackson Lumen Christi High School. The game will be broadcast live by radio station WSPD (88.1 FM).

"We wanted (Russell) to shoot," Trenton coach John Biedenbach said, "but we didn't want her to drive in and shoot layups. She might have been the total difference."

In helping Canton defeat the Trojannes for a third time this year, Russell got the Chiefs, who lost 22-40 at halftime, off to a good start in the second half as she drove for two layups in the first minute.

That boosted the Chiefs into a 27-21 lead, and Canton's advantage was never less than three points the rest of the game.

BUT IT was close until the end, and the Chiefs didn't have a comfortable lead until Ferko gave

girls basketball

them an eight-point margin, 41-33, with 3½ minutes remaining.

Even then, Canton needed free throws down the stretch to cement its first appearance in the final round of eight teams.

Trenton's height — 6-foot Katie Mans and 6-foot Kim Hoppes — gave the Chiefs trouble early, as those two combined to double team the 5-foot-11 Ferko and hold her to three first-half field goals from the low post. With a perimeter basket and 6-of-7 free throw shooting, Ferko had 14 points before halftime, however.

"WHEN THE ball went back to Hoppes' player, she recovered out," Canton coach Bob Blohm said. "And we didn't recognize it early. Hoppes was coming back outside, but when the ball came out we weren't patient enough to continue looking inside."

Russell's drives to the basket helped loosen up the defense in the second half, and the Chiefs were able to hit Ferko inside, resulting in layups or more free throws for an additional eight points.

"Going inside helped us a lot, because it got them in foul trouble and put us on the free-throw line," Blohm said. "That's a big part of basketball. You have to force the other team to guard you at the basket."

FREE THROWS were real important for Canton, which had one less field goal than the Trojannes but was 24-of-35 at the line. Trenton made 14 of 24 free throws. Ferko was 8-of-10, Russell 6-of-9 and Stacy Thompson 5-of-10.

"Our goal was to shut down Ferko," Biedenbach said. "We had done that against some other good players in our league, and we thought we could do

it again. We did a good job of double teaming her, but she's just a tough player. She works hard, and that's the thing."

The foul situation became critical for the Trojannes when Mans, who scored 16 points to lead Trenton, sat down with her fourth foul at 3:33 in the third quarter and the Chiefs leading 30-27.

RUSSELL DROVE for another layup and Ferko scored to give Canton a seven-point lead entering the final period.

"The key was on the blocked shot by Katie Mans," Biedenbach said. "We had to go two or three minutes with her on the bench, and that's when they got their spurt. Without her in the post, we're in trouble."

Trenton stayed within three, 36-33, on Brigitte Anderson's basket, but another key sequence fol-

lows.

Mary Barna, who held Hoppes to one field goal and six points, made a free throw, and Ferko scored back-to-back baskets, the second coming after a Thompson steal at midcourt with 3:47 remaining.

"Our defense was what helped us win the game," Thompson said. "With us being strong defensively in the beginning, it brought us out at the end. Our offense will come when our defense is there."

"We knew if we did our best we'd have a shot at the end, but we couldn't take that granted."

FERKO'S SECOND basket made the score 41-33, giving Canton its biggest lead to that point, and the Chiefs went to their delay game and subsequently the free-throw line to secure the victory.

Russell made four straight free throws, Thompson two and Barna one for a 48-38 lead with 12 seconds remaining.

"When we got ourselves on eight points, that was critical," Blohm said. "If you stay on four or six in a game like this, then you're susceptible."

Canton cagers toast of the school

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Now that Plymouth Canton's girls basketball team has made it to the Class A quarterfinals, people are starting to notice the Chiefs.

These people are their fellow students, however. From summer camp experiences, Canton already is well known around that state in basketball circles.

"Our school is so big it's hard for everyone to keep track of everything that's going on," said Stacy Thompson, a senior co-captain with Susan Ferko and Jenny Russell.

"We've had a lot of support from the school. Nobody knew who we were before, but now that we're starting to do something it's putting us in the spotlight."

Canton is one of eight teams remaining in the Class A tournament, and the Chiefs will be in the spotlight Wednesday when they play Benton Harbor at 7:30 p.m. in the Jackson Lumen Christi High School gymnasium.

"I'M EXCITED; I can't wait," Ferko said. "It's just fun to get there,

and we're going to play our best."

The Chiefs got into the game with a 21-2 record and No. 9 ranking statewide. Benton Harbor is 24-1 and rated No. 3. They beat East Lansing 55-41 in the regional final at Lansing Eastern.

Wednesday's winner advances to the semifinals Friday at Grand Rapids Union High School and will play the winner of the West Bloomfield-Taylor Center quarterfinal at 8 p.m.

The state championship game is scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday at Grand Valley State University.

"It's good to come this far and do well and play up to our potential," said Russell after she scored 12 points in Canton's 48-40 victory Wednesday over regional host Trenton.

"Now it's time to get back to work and work on getting into the Final Four."

With Ferko (center), Thompson (forward) and Russell (guard), Canton has a quality player with experience at each position. The trio has been the backbone of a ballclub that won a second straight Western Lakes

Activities Association title, held down the No. 1 ranking in Observers' poll all season and has gone the farthest of any Canton team in the state this tournament.

"FERKO AND Russell were sophomores on the varsity, and they were getting experience against the good teams (Plymouth) Salem had," Canton coach Bob Blohm said. "I think they were ready to do this."

Blohm has taken the Chiefs to within two games of the state final in his first year back as a varsity coach. He guided Salem to a 23-25 record from 1978-83, including three quarterfinal appearances, but was the JV coach at Canton before taking over for Rob Neu, who went into private business earlier this year.

"I feel real fortunate and lucky," Blohm said. "Hob did a great job with these kids, and I still feel it's his team somewhat. That's what I tell him — he should be here, helping to coach this team."

To win its first regional, Canton had to beat Trenton a third time this

season, and three straight wins against the same team can be difficult to do. But the Chiefs avoided any kind of letdown, getting a game-high 22 points from Ferko.

"We lost all three, so they're the better team," Trenton coach John Biedenbach said, "but all three were close. Bob has done a good job, and Ferko has my vote for all-state."

Canton defeated the Trojannes 50-41 in the season opener at Canton, and the Chiefs beat Trenton again in the consolation game of the Mercy Hoops Classic, 38-30.

BLOHM TOLD his players: "That was Game 1 and 4. Now it's like playing a new team."

"The kids got themselves ready to play and looked at Trenton, not as a team they had beaten twice, but as a team they had to defeat in the regional to get to the quarterfinals."

And that will be the next stop on the tournament trail for Canton.

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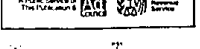
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