

Ottawa Hills hammers Lakers

By Marty Budner
staff writer

The shots wouldn't fall. The press didn't work. The strategy was ineffective. The calls went against them.

The dream ended. The green and white cried. Tears were shed not so much for losing a state championship game, but for a fantastic year that had to end sometime. And that's the way it was in 1989 for the courageous West Bloomfield girls basketball team.

THE LAKERS' season ended Saturday at Grand Valley State University in the Class A state championship game. West Bloomfield lost the title to a superior Grand Rapids Ottawa Hills squad, 61-32.

West Bloomfield finished with a 23-4 overall record. But, for the Lakers, who had never before reached the prestigious Final Four, it was a campaign they will never forget.

"No one expected us to reach this far," said Michelle Aerts, the lone senior starter.

"We lost the first game this year (to Milford), but I think that taught us a lot about ourselves too. I think we really got rolling and never looked back."

"We kept improving, and learning how to work together as a team. We continued working on what we had learned from the very beginning."

"We found ourselves taking it one game at a time and ended up here," she said. "But, honestly, this was a surprise. We didn't really expect ourselves to pull this off. I think we're happy and

girls basketball

quite satisfied as to where we ended up. We have no regrets."

Where they ended up was playing a determined Ottawa Hills squad that had been to the Final Four three times without a state title to show for it.

THE INDIANS, much taller and quicker than the Metro Suburban Activities Association Lakers, had their inside game working to perfection.

Ottawa Hills rolled to an easy 8-0 lead on four straight layups to start the game. Evelyn Baskin hit a 10-footer to give the Indians a 10-0 lead and already the Lakers were in trouble.

Lanise Boudas finally tallied West Bloomfield's first two points on a baseline jumper at the 2:15 mark. It was 17-8 after the first quarter and the Indians kept attacking with a 17-12 second-quarter scoring advantage.

Ottawa Hills, playing practically in their home gymnasium, strolled to a 34-10 halftime lead, and things were not looking well for West Bloomfield.

"I thought we were ready. But, we came out a little flat and maybe a little intimidated," said West Bloomfield's second-year coach Ronna Greenberg. "We were up for the game, but I definitely thought our slow start hampered us."

The second half did not treat West Bloomfield any kinder.

The Lakers were in foul trouble all the way and still could not get their shots to fall. West Bloomfield could not get any closer than 11 points.

STARTERS AERTS and Jody Persky fouled out with five minutes left in the game and that was it for the Lakers.

West Bloomfield, which shot 35 percent from the field during the season, shot a paltry 19 percent (11-56) against Ottawa Hills.

Aerts was the only Laker in double figures with 14 points. Amira Danforth had six points and four steals while Cindy VanMeter added five points.

Kaushada Hickman paced all scorers with 22 points, most from right under the basket. Nicole Taylor had 16 points and Baskin added 13.

"We made a couple runs at them but we were always stifled. But I have to be pleased with our performance," said Greenberg. "I mean, nobody in the world expected us to get this far, except for me."

"We did the best we could. They have some excellent basketball players and they didn't help us out any playing so well."

"Sure it was disappointing, but that's the way the ball bounced, I guess," she said. "Some days you get it, and some days you don't. (Ottawa Hills) was definitely the better team today."

Well, the ball bounced in West Bloomfield's favor most of the season. And that state runners-up trophy is something no one can ever take away from them.

Raiders anticipate successful season

By Ray Setlock
staff writer

Despite the loss of heavyweight Zalm Cummulaj, the North Farmington wrestling team is expecting to have another successful campaign.

Cummulaj finished third in the state and, according to coach Dick Cook, is the best wrestler the Raiders, who were 10-8 in duals last season, have ever had.

"He's going to be a tough guy to replace," Cook said. "Good heavyweights are hard to come by."

Also lost are Jack Beall and Jeff Jacobs. Beall wrestled in the 125-pound weight class and Jacobs at 171. Cook said Jacobs fulfilled the leadership role on last year's squad, and that will be missed.

"When you lose Jeff Jacobs, you lose a leader," he said. "He was an example to the rest of the guys."

The Raiders lost 14 seniors, but Cook doesn't see that as too big of a problem.

"We always put something together," Cook said. "And I don't see this season as any different."

Leading the way will be Matt Thompson at 145 pounds. He was a runner-up in the Western Lakes Activities Association last season and in the Oakland County championship.

"Matt's a fine wrestler," Cook said.

At 135 pounds, Lucian Van Cleave is expected to contribute. He finished second in the WLA last season.

"Both Thompson and Van Cleave won over 30 matches," Cook said. "So we have a good base from which to build on."

Jeremy May, Marcus Brown, Jeff Head, Adam Cook and Rob Jamrog also are expected to contribute for the Raiders this season.

"We've got some promising kids," Cook said. "We should have a fairly good team."

FARMINGTON HILLS Harrison hopes it can repeat as Class B district champion this season.

Lost from last year's squad are Ted Prusinski and Matt King. Prusinski handled the 125-pound class, while King took care of the 185 division.

"We lose a lot of experience in those guys," coach Matt Gasser said. "Now we have only one senior on the team."

wrestling

That senior is 6-foot-1, 270-pound heavyweight Jeff Beyer, an offensive lineman on Harrison's state championship football team.

"He's a big person," Gasser said. "Being the only senior, he'll be our leader."

Also expected to have strong seasons are junior Gary Devine and sophomore David Prusinski.

Gasser expects Devine (140), the noseguard and back-up tailback on the football team, and Prusinski (112) to have good seasons.

"You better watch out for these guys," Gasser said. "They are going to be tough. We have a lot of tough kids."

Despite their youth, Gasser doesn't think opposing teams should count the Hawks out.

"We're going to upset a lot of people," he said. "Don't count us out."

FARMINGTON suffered through a 5-13 season a year ago, but, according to coach Al Beyer, the Falcons are going to be a much-improved team.

"If we work hard, there is no question we can be a good team," he said. "We might surprise some people."

The Falcons lost experience when Todd Jacobs graduated last fall. He was a league champion at 145 pounds.

Chris Phillips and Jody Lockman, both seniors, are expected to carry much of the load this season.

Phillips, at 119, earned a 13-14 record last season, and Beyer believes he can contribute with leadership, too.

"Chris Phillips will help this team with his leadership skills," Beyer said. "And, if Lockman works hard, he is capable of a good season."

A major loss for the Falcons is the injury to Dave Winey, the team captain. A thigh injury will keep him from wrestling.

"It's a big loss for us," Beyer said. "If he can come back, he would really help this team."

Chris Kresl, Steve Walter, Joe Gaudesone and Brian Link, all juniors, are also expected to contribute for Farmington this season.

WB pressure too much for Canton

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

The bigger the game, the more pressure there is.

Pressure was the key word in many respects Friday night as West Bloomfield squired Plymouth Canton's title hopes in the semifinals of the Class A girls basketball tournament, 45-40.

In the last two minutes, the Lakers used their noted pressure defense to tip the scales in their favor and, handling the emotional pressure as well, won the game with free throws.

West Bloomfield scored the last six points on free throws to overcome a 40-39 deficit at Grand Rapids Union High School and steal what appeared would be a Canton victory.

"We're really been hitting well in pressure situations," Lakers coach Ronna Greenberg said. "When there's no pressure, we haven't been shooting well. I haven't been able to figure that out all year."

West Bloomfield gained its margin of victory at the line, where it was 15-of-19, and the Chiefs, who ended the season with a 22-4 record, were 9-of-15. The Lakers, 24-4, lost to Grand Rapids Ottawa Hills in the championship Saturday, 61-32.

JUNIOR GUARD Amira Danforth made nine of 10 free throws, shot 8-of-8 in the second half, and finished with 13 points. Michelle Aerts, the only senior in West's starting lineup, scored 14.

Canton senior Susan Ferko achieved a game-high 19 points, with 11 coming in the second half, when her teammates were able to get her the ball more often.

But the Chiefs, who led by two to five points much of the game, saw a potential victory slip away in the final minutes.

"One of our goals was to get to the last week of the season," Canton coach Bob Blohm said. "It just didn't end the way we wanted."

"But, for a long time, it looked like we were going to have that outcome. I told the kids these are the hardest games you'll play because of the pressure and the intensity."

Ferko's last basket gave Canton a 40-37 lead with 2½ minutes to play. Following a Danforth layup, a turnover and missed 1-and-1 opportunity prevented the Chiefs from increasing the margin.

THE LAKERS won a scramble for a loose ball under the Canton basket, and the result was Lanise Boudas making both ends of a two-shot foul, which put West on top 41-40 with 48 seconds remaining.

Canton's next possession ended in a turnover when Aerts stole the ball at midcourt and knuckled it ahead to Danforth, who was fouled and made both free throws for a three-point margin with 37 on the clock.

The game was virtually decided when the Chiefs committed another turnover in the frontcourt with 22 seconds left. Shannon Sipperley, who clipped in eight points, as did Boudas, tucked on two additional free throws.

"We were working real hard and wanted to get the job done, but we tried to play too fast and weren't patient enough," Blohm said.

If the Chiefs had reversed the ball against the press and looked for an up-court pass more often instead of

putting the ball on the floor, Canton might have gotten more high-percentage shots and produced a different outcome, according to Blohm.

"We used the dribble too much against the press instead of look, see, pass," he said. "We did it sometimes, but it was a matter of consistency."

"BASKETBALL IS a game of decisions. We made some good ones and some bad ones, but I'm not the least bit disappointed in this team."

After handling the West Bloomfield press in the first half, the Chiefs encountered difficulty in the third quarter, during which they had six of their 18 turnovers.

"We changed our press a bit in the second half," Greenberg said, explaining the Lakers used a 1-2-1 diamond and, she believed, caught Canton out of guard.

"I knew in many respects it would be like playing a mirror. I thought it would be a real defensive ballgame. But that's been our forte all year and (the defense) really came through for us tonight."

Canton's 75-percent shooting (8-of-12) in the third quarter helped it overcome the turnovers.

Sipperley, Aerts and Danforth combined to give West Bloomfield a 25-22 lead late in the period, but the Chiefs rallied to regain the advantage at 30-25 on Mary Barna's baseline shot. Christyn Halliday's triple in the final seconds made it 33-27 entering the fourth quarter.

But, unlike the first half, when Canton scored half of its 16 points on free throws, the Lakers were at the line more often in the second half, converting 14 of 17.

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