

# Mustangs perfect in districts during decade

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Birmingham Marian swept the decade. The defending Class A state champions won their 10th consecutive district title in girls basketball Friday with a 55-51 victory over Oak Park.

In many ways, this year's title is the most satisfying for Marian coach Mary Lillie-Cicerone. Sure, the Mustangs needed two overtimes to defeat Oak Park for the championship last fall. But Marian had a seasoned team last year that knew how to play in clutch situations.

This year was totally different.

## BASKETBALL

Lillie-Cicerone started two sophomores, a junior, and one senior alongside returning veteran Crystal Andrews on Friday. But the Mustangs made veteran plays down the stretch to clinch their 16th district title in Lillie-Cicerone's 17th year as coach. "We've won a lot of districts, but this team has come a long way since day one," said Lillie-Cicerone. "We felt if we could beat Oak Park and win districts that's a big, big thing for us."

Last year was tough (against Oak Park). We didn't play well

and Oak Park played great," she said. "But we played really well today. We played as a team and stayed within the concept of what we wanted to do. And they didn't get out of it."

Marian took a 10-2 lead, but the Knights stormed back and trailed by just four points entering the second quarter. Oak Park crept to within one at half-time, 27-26.

The second half featured six lead changes and there was never more than a five-point difference.

The Knights held a 39-38 lead entering the final quarter and hiked the advantage to 43-38

shortly into the fourth. However, Marian outscored Oak Park 17-8 over the next five minutes to secure the victory.

Junior Amber Mazza netted nine of those points, including a big putback of a missed free throw by sophomore Kennice Halloran that put Marian up 53-48 with 1:28 remaining.

"We took our time and I felt we did a really good job in the first half, but they got back in the game with us missing some good shots," said Lillie-Cicerone. "We wanted to take some good shots and be super patient because they can run some fast breaks and shoot the lights out."

"They have superior athleticism, but we did exactly what we wanted to do. If they gave us the break, we took it. They go for a lot of steals, so we knew if they didn't get it they'd be out of position."

"We were confident and we felt we could win this game if we did those things," she said. "The kids just played super today."

Andrews led Marian with 21 points. She also had nine rebounds. Mazza finished with 13 points and Katie Solner eight. Marian (14-9) will play Plymouth Salem in a regional game Monday at Birmingham Groves High, starting at 7:30 p.m.

# Southfield success proud moment for Kelso family

BY BRAD EMOUS  
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When he coached at Detroit Cooley, Ben Kelso captured three consecutive boys state championships (1987-89).

But Friday night's stunning 45-44 district final win at Livonia Ladywood probably brought a bigger smile to his face. With his daughter Jennifer leading the way with 16 points and Safiyah Bibbins adding 14 points (all in the first half), the Blue Jays won their first district girls title of the decade.

"It's been a lot of years since this happened — over 12 years," said Kelso, whose team improved to 21-1 overall and will face Dearborn Fordson in the regional semifinals, 7:30 p.m. Monday at Ladywood. "The kids wanted it so bad and I wanted it so bad for them."

"You have to understand these girls all grew up in the same community and have known each other since they were 3 years-old."

Ladywood, the Catholic League runner-up and winners of the last two districts, bowed out at 16-7 overall. The Blazers led 17-9 after one quarter and didn't relinquish the lead until 5:26 left in the final period when Kelso, a 5-foot-11 senior, scored inside to make it 39-38.

## BASKETBALL

Southfield then stretched the lead to five, 43-38, on basket by Bibbins (after a steal) and a short baseline jumper by freshman Kineta Taylor.

After a free throw by Jasmine Williams put Southfield ahead 45-42, Ladywood drew back to 45-44 with 17 seconds remaining on an inside bucket by Liz Obrecht.

With 16 seconds to go, Ladywood fouled Moore, who missed the front end of a one-and-one. But Blazers turned the ball back over on a steal by Bibbins.

With 3.2 seconds remaining, Bibbins stepped to the line and missed the front end of another one-on-one.

Obrecht snared the rebound and passed the ball up court, but Kristen Barnes' desperation three-point attempt did not hit

the rim, sending the Blue Jays' fans into a wild celebration.

"We had a three-minute drought where we missed wide-open layups and open jumpers that we normally make," Ladywood coach Andrea Gorski said. "When we didn't make those, it gave their team an opportunity to come back."

Ladywood shot itself in the foot with seven fourth-quarter turnovers, many unforgotten after getting Southfield to cough up the ball.

"When we needed to get the ball back, we'd come back down and throw it away, which is uncharacteristic of this team," Gorski said. "I think we panicked. Maybe our heads weren't in it for some reason."

Melissa Harakas, who made the Blazers' only three-point shot of the night, led Ladywood with 13 points.

Sister Michelle, hampered by a

sprained ankle and bloody nose, finished with 10. Obrecht, the 6-2 sophomore center, contributed nine points and 11 rebounds.

Southfield, meanwhile, overcame some adversity of its own.

Bibbins, a 6-9 senior, sprained her ankle just before the end of the first half, but later returned. Kelso also hit her head on the floor midway through the final quarter and was wobbly.

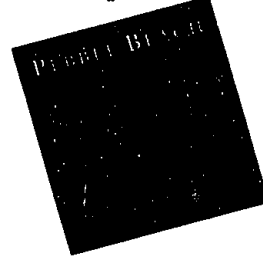
And to make matters worse,

Moore, the team's primary ball handler, was saddled with four second-half fouls.

That prompted Kelso to revert to a semi-delay game with 6:16 to go.

"We were hurt, tired and we wanted to get the game to the end," Kelso said. "Jennifer said, 'Don't take me out.' And Bibbins told me, 'I can hurt tomorrow, put me back in.'"

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