



Williamsville North's Alex Calderon tries to make a move around Clarence's Nick Miano in the Spartans' 47-45 Section VI Class AA prequarterfinal loss last Wednesday.

Photo by John Rusac
Purchase photos at www.BeeNews.com

Seniors step up for Sweet Home boys hoops

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

Sweet Home's journey to a possible New York State Class AA championship began with a convincing 67-44 home win over Lockport on Friday in the Section VI quarterfinals.

The Panthers jumped on the Lions early, leading 20-11 after the first quarter, and outscored Lockport, 22-8, in the second quarter to put the game out of reach.

Sweet Home coach Paul Schintzius got great balanced scoring from his seniors, led by Terrell Rankin's 20 points. Senior Ali Ramadan, who has been for six weeks because of academic reasons, banged inside for 12 points and six rebounds and helped classmate Glenroy Carr score 11 points and haul in 18 rebounds. Senior Eric Schnirel added 10 points.

Point guard Steven Roberts (four points), another senior, set the tone early by stealing the ball twice from Lockport's Derrick Herring, scoring once and assisted to junior Josh Parker (six points) for a layup.

"The seniors stepped up," said Schintzius. "This is kind of our time of the year. Last year laid the

groundwork and this year we had a good regular season and won our league. I think they're focused on having the same run we had last year. They came out strong and ready to play."

Schintzius was also happy that every one of his players who dressed saw playing time.

"In a sectional game, I didn't anticipate to play everyone on my roster," he said. "We didn't play as well as I would have liked in the second half but they never got closer than the final score."

The win puts Sweet Home (17-4) in the semifinals against Orchard Park (17-4), who gave Sweet Home its only two league losses, at 6 p.m. Thursday at Buffalo State Sports Arena.

"We're really looking forward to it," said Schintzius. "This is the kind of game where if anyone got revenge and a little bit of payback on our mind, it's us."

If Sweet Home wins, the Panthers, ranked 23rd in New York State, could face top-seed Niagara Falls in the AA finals at 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, also at Buffalo State. The Wolverines (19-2), seeded first in the AA bracket and ranked third in the state, plays Jamestown (18-4) after the Sweet Home-OP game.

e-mail: pnagy@beenews.com

Sweet Home girls bow out in Class 'AA' quarterfinals

Lancaster could do no wrong in its Section VI Class 'AA' quarterfinal home victory over Sweet Home last Thursday.

The Lady Redskins, seeded third, outscored the sixth-seeded Lady Panthers, 17-5, in the second quarter en route to a 56-27 victory.

"It was just not our night," said Sweet Home coach Matt LaRoach. "Our shots just didn't fall for us. We struggled to rebound when we needed to and Lancaster came out on fire. From the start Lancaster shot red hot from the field. We knew that they would play man to man and shoot the ball well and that's exactly what they did. It's unfortunate because there were no surprises. They just seemed to have everything going in their favor once the game started."

Sweet Home was led by Kiaya Burks' 10 points and 12 rebounds.

"I also thought our guards Amanda Cannizzo (five points) and Gleniesha Ferby both played well," said LaRoach.

Lancaster was led by Barb Kilszek's 18 points.

"Overall, this game was a tough one to swallow," LaRoach said. "We just struggled to get anything going in our favor. We struggled to rebound, close out on shooters, knock down shots, and get in any rhythm. I really feel that we are a better team than how we played and what the scoreboard reflected. This was not the way for us to end our season and I only hope our kids take this as a motivator for next season and for the offseason."

Sweet Home beat 11th-seed Kenmore West, 53-49, at home on Feb. 20 in the prequarterfinals. The Lady Panthers closed out the regular season with a 43-36 on Feb. 16.

The Ken West playoff game was tight throughout. The Lady Blue Devils led, 17-15, after the first quarter but Sweet Home came back to take a 27-24 halftime advantage and were up 41-37 after the third quarter. With under two minutes remaining in the game, Ellie Allen, who opened the game with a three-pointer which LaRoach said

got his team going, hit two of two free throws along with Nadia Durno, to seal the win.

"This was such a great team effort," said LaRoach. "We scrapped and battled all four quarters. Our intensity was evident right away and that carried over in the second half."

"We really played a consistent basketball game," LaRoach added. "There was no let down."

Allen scored 23 points, pulled down eight rebounds, and passed out four assists.

"She really stepped up big for us," said LaRoach. "I thought she did a great job on both ends of the floor and was a great leader."

LaRoach said he also received great individual efforts from Burks (eight points), Coretta Davis (eight points), Durno (seven points), Cannizzo (four points), and Laura Nerber (two points).

"They all contributed in many ways," said LaRoach. "It has been a long time since we have hosted a sectional playoff game and this was a great win for our kids, our fans, and our program."

Ken West was led by Jenna Rickan's 23 points.

Sweet Home finishes the season 8-14. Burks, Maygan Voros, and Michelle Price are the only seniors on the team. Burks has been selected to participate in the

Cheektowaga Lions Club Senior All Star Classic on Saturday, March 24.

"The future however is very bright for Sweet Home basketball as we will return nine of 12 players and three additional players who were called up during sectionals," said LaRoach. "I am very excited and encouraged for what the future holds for our team and program. The depth, experience, and retiring players should lead to success next season. The toughest aspect of the loss against Lancaster was knowing we are finished for 2006-07. I feel this let down more than ever right now and I cannot wait to get back into the gym to build on this year's progress and move forward towards next season."

"We experienced many highs and lows this season and in the end we held our heads high knowing our future is bright," LaRoach added. "We will continue to improve and get better this offseason through summer leagues, team camps, and workouts so that our success continues to grow next season. I am proud of our progress this season and I look forward to the future for our basketball program. Our hard work, commitment, and dedication will lead to more progress next year."

Missed opportunities end North's season

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

It was the same old story for Williamsville North in their Section VI Class AA prequarterfinal boys basketball game at Clarence on Feb. 21.

The Spartans played aggressive early, were tough defensively, but couldn't cash in on their offensive opportunities and lost, 47-45.

"Our missed opportunities did us in at the end," said North coach Chuck Swierski.

A perfect example of North's inability to cash in was at the free throw line. The Spartans, usually a 68-percent free throw shooting team, made only 10 of 22 attempts, including 3 of 10 in the first half. North also only shot 3 of 11 from three-point range.

"Defensively, I couldn't have been happier," said Swierski. "Alex Barth (seven rebounds, two points) shut down their best player, Greg Stevens, to 10 points after he had scored 24 and 19 points in our first two meetings. But we couldn't make free throws and offensively, could not make open shots."

North junior John Piaggione, who finished with a game-high 16 points, made key plays with under two minutes remaining.

Trailing Clarence by six, Piaggione scored five straight points (free throw, putback on missed second free throw attempt, and fastbreak layup) to cut the Spartan deficit to one. Piaggione then stole the inbounds pass, tried a behind the back pass which he turned over to Clarence, who scored on a fastbreak going in the opposite direction.

"That was the big play of the game I thought," said Swierski.

Swierski said the last minute of the game was a blur. North fouled Clarence who missed the front end of two one and ones. Swierski called a timeout with four seconds left to run a play on the side intended for either a Brian Davis jumper or, if he could not beat his key off the dribble, to dump it to Ryan Young (11 points, six rebounds) underneath for a bucket. Instead, Davis threw a pass to Piaggione, who attempted a 25-foot three at the buzzer that clanked off the left side of the rim.

North led 13-7 after the first quarter and 22-20 at halftime but trailed 40-36 after the third quarter.

Alex Ulrich added six points and seven rebounds for North.

North finish the season 9-12, although Swierski said his team was in at least nine of the games they lost.

Young, who led the team in points, rebounds, blocks and was second in steals, graduates as does point guard Alex Calderon, Davis and reserves Zach Boron and John Ticco.

e-mail: pnagy@beenews.com

FREE* visit us on-line @ www.AmherstBee.com

*free access to our paid subscribers!

Sports briefs

Pop Warner football is forming a new league structure in the Buffalo-Niagara region for the 2007 season and is looking for organizations to join.

Pop Warner little Scholar Inc. is nationally recognized in over 42 states. There are currently over 1,350 associations, making up 145 leagues. Teams in various age/weights divisions are forming. There are also cheerleading and dance teams. Any town associations wanting to be involved are welcome. There is no experience needed.

ESPN and Disney are sponsors and the national championship game will air on ESPN at the Disney Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Fla.

For more information, call 473-6387.

Dave & Buster's Grand Sports Cafe at Eastern Hills Mall, 4545 Transit Road, Williamsville, will air the Ultimate Fighting Challenge "UFC and the Uprising" pay per view at 10 p.m. Saturday, March 3.

The event, which features a fight between Tim Sylvia and Randy Couture, is free for all customers before 10 p.m.

For more information, call 932-2515 or visit www.daveandbusters.com