

# St. John's wins fourth-fifth grade silver division

St. John's defeated Notre Dame, 21-12, to win the silver division of Amherst Youth Basketball's fourth-fifth grade division.

This was the team's second meeting in the playoffs and like the first game, it turned into a hard fought defensive battle. St. John's jumped out to a 7-3 lead over Notre Dame after the first quarter and never looked back. They expanded their lead into the third quarter to 13-4 but knew there was no letting up as Notre Dame is capable of an explosive offense that had previously outscored St. John's, 14-6, in the fourth quarter.

This fourth quarter was no different. Notre Dame came out with their double and triple team defense and scored eight points. The difference this game was that St. John's was prepared. Through the expert ball handling of Ryan Konotopski, they were able to find the open man to hold Notre Dame at bay and also score eight points.

Konotopski, who has been superb throughout the season and playoffs, seemed to reach a new level. Despite being double-teamed, he calmly and confidently ran the St. John's offense, not phased by the intensity of the defense thrown his way. He found Cort Williams and Alex Wehrlin in the fourth quarter for six of the team's eight points. Wehrlin was



St. John's defeated Notre Dame, 21-12, to win the silver division of Amherst Youth Basketball's fourth-fifth grade division. Members of the team, pictured from left, are — front row - Max Brightenfield, Connor Smith, Ryan Konotopski, Matthew Laughlin, Andrew Rasimas; second row — Stephen Gervase, Timmy Kreuz, Alex Wehrlin, Cort Williams; third row — coaches Bob Laughlin and Dwayne Smith.

able to close down Notre Dame's offense underneath with a number of blocked shots.

Key to the St. John's win was the high level of defense that each player kept up throughout. Matthew Laughlin and Konotopski were again given the difficult task of guarding the highly capable Notre Dame guards, and were able to hold them scoreless. This defensive strength of Laughlin was discovered halfway through the season and has been used successfully ever since.

Guarding Notre Dame's forwards was no easy task, but St.

John's again called on Timmy Kreuz, Williams and Stephen Gervase for the hard play down low. Their tough defense was key to the low scoring effort by Notre Dame. Kreuz added three points while Williams added two. Gervase again played strong defensively while aggressively rebounding on both offense and defense and holding second shots by the opponent to a minimum while allowing St. John's additional offensive attempts. Andrew Rasimas, who has consistently improved throughout the season, played some of his best

teamwork of the year while aggressively going after loose balls and a defensive performance that held his man scoreless.

Alex Grano and Mitch Fors ran the Notre Dame offense and played outstanding defense against the very capable St. John's guards. Their efforts were a key reason for the low scoring game. Nick Aja, Joel Sanford and Sean McClean came on strong in the fourth quarter to score a combined eight points which reminded St. John's what this team is capable of.

St. John's Connor Smith and Max Brightenfield, who were out with injuries for the season showed their team spirit and cheered their team on from the bench.

## St. John's 24, Notre Dame 23

Games don't get more exciting than St. John's 24-23 win over Notre Dame in a semifinal game held on March 6 at Erie Community College.

Down 19-9 going into the final quarter, Notre Dame managed to fight back to lose by only one. Notre Dame, who struggled offensively early, came out red hot in the fourth quarter, scoring 14 points. Nick Aja and Joel Stanford each had four points in the quarter while Alex Grano, Mitch Fors and Sean McClean each added two. Overall, Mitch Fors led the offense with seven points followed

by Joel Sanford with six points.

St. John's scoring was led by Cort Williams, who had 10 points on some excellent moves to the basket, while Alex Wehrlin added eight points for the Red Storm. Williams and Wehrlin were just as valuable under the boards with their impressive rebounding.

Equally as strong under the boards was Timmy Kreuz, who pulled down a number of rebounds and added four points to the team's tally. St. John's team offense was run by point guards Connor Smith and Ryan Konotopski, who had little trouble controlling the ball and feeding it into the open man against an excellent Notre Dame defense. Without the ball handling ability of both, Notre Dame's aggressive defense would have been difficult to overcome.

Matt Laughlin was given the difficult task of guarding the potentially explosive Alex Grano and was able to hold him to only two points. Laughlin's defensive ability continues to be key in St. John's march to the finals. Andrew Rasimas and Stephen Gervase continued to play their consistent game on both defense and offense with their continued fight for loose balls, excellent defense and in on almost all rebounds. Gervase was able to pull down a number of rebounds while Rasimas was able to fight for a number of loose balls. Rasimas added two points.

# Louisville crowned 'C' champions

Louisville defeated West Virginia, 19-10, on Saturday to win the Amherst Youth Basketball fourth-fifth grade "C" championship.

The opening quarter was a defensive battle with Louisville coming out on top, 4-0. Louisville's Michael Garofalo scored on a nice driving layup while Pedro Pereira had a putback.

During the second quarter, each team's defense still dominated but the teams played evenly. West Virginia scored four points and Louisville scored three points. West Virginia's Ryan Woods made two points on a great drive to the basket. Ryan Czerwinski added two more on a jump shot. Pereira scored all three second quarter points for the Cardinals. Louisville led, 7-4, at halftime.

Louisville scored six points in the third quarter. Matt Rosen sank a putback, Ben Clement made a short jumper and Kevin Zachau hit a long range jump shot. West Virginia scored four points on two nice jump shots by Mitchell Koslowski and Czerwinski. Louisville extended its lead to five at the end of three quarters.

Louisville scored six fourth quarter points while holding West Virginia to two

free throws to win the game and the championship.

Louisville was led offensively by Pereira's five points. Other Cardinals scoring were Rosen (four points), Zachau (four points), Garofalo (two points), Clement (two points), and Kevin Roginson (two points). Jake August, Mickey Evans, and Paul McKay played strong defensively for Louisville.

West Virginia was led offensively by Czerwinski (three points). Jacob Huber, Koslowski, and Woods added two points apiece while Steven Zaprowski scored one point. John Freda, Austen Renzi, Steve Bunce and Billy Hartford played well defensively.

## Louisville 24, Seton Hall 17

This "C" division loser bracket semifinal was a rematch between two teams that had a barn burner of a first round playoff game one week ago in which Seton Hall won 35-34. This game was expected to be another hotly contested game between two evenly matched teams.

Louisville took a 6-2 first quarter lead with tough defense and balanced offense. In the second and third quarters, the teams played dead even with each team scoring

nine points.

Louisville led, 15-11, after three quarters. The Cardinals' offense exploded for nine fourth quarter points while holding Seton Hall to six points to seal the victory. The Cardinals' last quarter offensive charge was led by Ben Clement (four points) and Kevin Roginson (three points).

The Cardinals offense was led by Kevin Zachau's five points. Other Cardinals scoring were Clement (four points), Michael Garofalo (four points), Mickey Evans (four points), Pedro Pereira (four points), and Roginson (three points). Jake August, Matt Rosen, and Paul McKay played well defensively for Louisville.

Seton Hall was led offensively by Jason Masiewicz and Eric Ruh, who each scored six points. Other Seton Hall players scoring were Matt Macomber (three points) and Daniel Mayers (two points). Nick Flaherty, Thomas Jackson, Taylor O'Brien, Kellen Pembleton, and JP Rehak played well defensively.

## Louisville 27, Rutgers 16

Louisville took a commanding 12-2 first quarter lead with a balanced offense and swarming defense.

Five Cardinals scored in the first quarter.

Pedro Pereira led the Cardinals with four points.

Both team's defenses dominated the offenses in the second quarter. Louisville led, 13-6, at halftime.

The offenses took over in the second half. Louisville scored 14 second half points. Kevin Roginson sparked Louisville with six second half points. Kevin Zachau added five points. Mickey Evans made a long range jumper that wowed the crowd.

Rutgers scored 10 second half points and was led by Blake Rickan's five points.

The Cardinals were led offensively by Pereira, Roginson and Zachau, who each scored six points. Other Cardinals scoring were Evans (four points), Michael Garofalo (three points) and Ben Clement (two points). Jake August, Matt Rosen and Paul McKay played strong games defensively.

Rutgers was led offensively by Rickan's five points. Other Rutgers players scoring were Michael Shi (four points), Lucas Perna (two points), Zachary Schneider (two points), Matt Soos (two points), and Nikalaus Castilone (one point). Benjamin Saathoff, Davontae Bailey, and Ken Sniatki played well defensively.

# Colorado holds off Oklahoma to earn sixth grade girls title

The Colorado Buffalos received a spectacular third quarter from Kayla Burt and held off a hard nosed Oklahoma Sooners team, 32-17, in the finals of the Amherst Youth Basketball sixth grade girls division held at Clearfield Community Center on Saturday morning.

The first half was an example of hard nosed defense from both teams as Oklahoma received solid interior defensive play from Jennifer DelSignore, Emily Marcus, and Sarah Stanford while Colorado was sparked defensively by Alexis Cook, Jane Truesdale, who finished with several steals, and the return of Emily Ludwig at center. Meanwhile, a late second quarter rebound and putback by Nadia Vasquez gave Colorado an 8-5 halftime lead and provided a spark for the third quarter fireworks.

Burt began the third quarter with consecutive steals and finished the plays with layups while Shelby Donhauser and Emily Malkowski provided

big defensive rebounds that kept the Sooners off balance. Burt finished the third quarter with 12 consecutive points and the 20-7 lead by Colorado seemed insurmountable heading into the fourth.

However, Marcus and Hannah Pilkey led one last charge for Oklahoma by scoring consecutive baskets to start the fourth. Marcus drove the lane and put in a floater followed by a Pilkey layup to reduce the lead to nine points. That's when Megan Cirbus took the bull by the horns. Cirbus scored the next six points for Colorado on a wide range of plays that included a steal and a breakaway layup and a jump shot from the baseline followed by a layup off a pick and roll. Burt completed the scoring with four foul shots down the stretch to end the season.

Burt led Colorado and all scorers with 24 points. Cirbus had six points and Vasquez chipped in two. Oklahoma's Pilkey had six points. Marcus scored five, DelSignore chipped in four and Stanford added two.

## Sports briefs

**The Williamsville Zion Saints**, a new association with Pop Warner Little Scholar Football and Cheer/Dance, will have an early registration from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, March 24 at Zion Dominion Church 895 North Forest, Williamsville (formerly the Chapel), in the family first center.

All families throughout Western New York are welcome. Boys and girls from ages 5 to 14 are eligible. The cost is \$125 and includes all equipment. If you bring a can good or non-perishable item to be donated to the Western New York Food Bank, you will receive a \$5 discount on registration. The league is also taking resumes for a few coaching positions. For more information, call 444-4741.

**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.