

TRIPLE CROWN

DIVISION 2 GIRLS BASKETBALL: BELCHERTOWN 54 / PITTSFIELD 43

Orioles finish task, bring home first basketball title

By SARAH MOOMAW
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AMHERST — The Belchertown girls basketball team had a six-point lead with 31.5 seconds left in the Western Massachusetts Division 2 Tournament final when coach Jay Woodcock told sophomore Cara McKenzie she had made the play of the game.

The 6-foot-2 center blocked No. 2 Pittsfield's Lauren Carnevale in the post and grabbed the rebound. McKenzie dished the ball off to senior Téa Spellacy, who quickly drew a foul and went to shoot free throws, giving Woodcock a chance to pull her aside.

"I didn't know how to respond," McKenzie said. "When you get (the block), there's like a rush. I don't know how to describe it, it's such a great feeling."

It was a key stop and Spellacy hit both free throws, then added three

more in the final seconds to secure a 54-43 win and the No. 5 Orioles' first basketball championship at Curry Hicks Cage Saturday.

"Play of the game, I thought at that moment in time," Woodcock said. "I told the girls before the game that history was in front of them, we had a chance to do something very special and they performed. They did it."

Belchertown (15-8) will face Central Massachusetts winner Medfield (18-5) in the state semifinal at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the MassMutual Center in Springfield. The Generals finished the season at 18-4.

Spellacy, a senior captain, finished with a career-high 32 points.

"My goal was to get to the Cage. I never thought we'd win two games at the Cage and to finish off my senior

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JERREY ROBERTS

The No. 5 Belchertown team celebrates after defeating No. 2 Pittsfield in the Western Massachusetts Division 2 Tournament championship Saturday at Curry Hicks Cage. For more photos, visit GazetteNET.com.



JERREY ROBERTS

The No. 7 South Hadley team celebrates its win against No. 2 Tantasqua in the Western Massachusetts Division 2 Tournament championship Saturday at Curry Hicks Cage. For more photos, visit GazetteNET.com.

DIVISION 2 BOYS BASKETBALL: SOUTH HADLEY 67 / TANTASQUA 63

Tigers win 7th title under Guiel

By MIKE MORAN
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AMHERST — South Hadley boys basketball coach Jeff Guiel emerged from the locker room on Saturday with an unraveled tie draped around his neck. He was wearing a T-shirt that read "If not now" on the front and "when" on the back.

His team gave it to him two years ago following its season, which ended with a loss in the state finals. Guiel took the following year off for personal reasons but stayed in touch with the players. He returned to the sidelines this season and when the team reached the Western Massachusetts Division 2 Tournament, he wore it for every game. It served as the team mantra.

With its leading scorer Cam Earle bottled up by defenders, the remaining Tigers took the mantra to heart as seventh-seeded South Hadley took an early lead and held on for a 67-63 victory over No. 4 Tantasqua in the sectional championship at Curry Hicks Cage.

"It's amazing," Earle said. "It's the perfect way to end senior year and for everyone on the team. I couldn't have done it without my coach."

It was South Hadley's seventh championship, all under Guiel since 2001. The Tigers (15-8) are 16-3 at the Cage since that first crown. The Tigers will face Marlboro (20-3) in the state semifinals at 4 p.m. Tuesday at the MassMutual Center in Springfield.

"Tears, laughter. Just an incredible sense of happiness for what we've been through," said Guiel in describing this run.

Earle finished with a game-high 22 points, but 10 of those points came in the final 1 minute, 24 seconds as South Hadley fended off the Warriors (18-4). Earle went 8 for 8 at the free-throw line as part of those 10. He was 0 for 9 from 3-point range.

"It felt pretty good," Earle said of the free throws. "Free throws are huge and I'm just glad I could make them."

Earle had 45 points in a quarterfinal round win over Shepherd Hill and 38 in the semifinals against Pittsfield. He needs 16 points for 1,000 in his career.

"The anxiety I had was knowing having scouted Tantasqua and knowing how good, big, fast,

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DIVISION 4 BOYS BASKETBALL: HOPKINS 47 / MONSON 25

Golden Hawks complete program turnaround with championship

By MIKE MORAN
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AMHERST — The Hopkins Academy boys basketball team made a minor change to its defense at halftime.

Sure, the Golden Hawks trailed top-seeded Monson by five, but their defense was working with the exception of Stephen O'Shea, who got loose for 12 points.

In the second half second-seeded Hopkins put on a defensive clinic and cruised to a Western Massachusetts Division 4 Tournament championship with a 47-25 win Saturday at Curry Hicks Cage.

"Bringing this title back to Hopkins is great," senior Zach Kelley said. "It's rare that we get to the Western Mass. finals. It will probably become more frequent coming up in a couple years, but it feels great to bring it back to Hopkins."

It was the Golden Hawks' third championship and first since winning Division 3 in 1999. It capped a remarkable turnaround from three seasons ago when the team finished 0-20. Two years ago they won three games.

"It's a long path," said Kelley, whose father Paul won a title in 1981. "This feels a lot better than 0-20 that's for sure. It's just feels great, knowing where we started and where we are now, it's crazy. It's crazy."

Hopkins (21-2) will play Sutton (21-3) in the state semifinal Tuesday at 7:45 p.m. at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Hopkins finished runner-up in the state in 1999.

"This by far, as a coach, is 100 times better for me than as a player because there is not much that I can do other than to prepare them," said Hopkins coach Angelo Thomas, who won two

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JERREY ROBERTS

The No. 2 Hopkins Academy team celebrates its win against No. 1 Monson in the Western Massachusetts Division 4 Tournament championship Saturday at Curry Hicks Cage. For more photos, visit GazetteNET.com.

GEORGE WASHINGTON 87 / UMASS 65

UMass routed by GW in season finale, seeded 8th in A-10 tourney

By MATT VAUTOUR
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WASHINGTON D.C. — After skidding for the past two weeks, the UMass men's basketball team crash-landed in its season finale.

In the Smith Center, the same building where the Minutemen overcame foul trouble and injury for a huge win last year, UMass delivered its worst showing in 2015, falling to George Washington, 87-65, Saturday.

The loss left the Minutemen as the No. 8 seed in the Atlantic 10 tournament. They'll play No. 9 La Salle,

Thursday at noon.

The teams were close early, but GW had four of its nine first-half 3-pointers in an 18-1 half-closing run that left the Minutemen stunned. Trailing 48-28, UMass got the ball with 22 seconds left and a chance to hold for the last shot. But Derrick Gordon attempted a long 2 well outside his normal shooting range. GW got the rebound, called timeout and drew up a play that led to Kethan Savage's coast-to-coast layup that made it 50-28 at halftime.

Things got worse in the second half as the Colonials scored seven of the first eight points to make it 57-29.

"That was a first half that I'd like to forget to be honest with you. I thought that the wheels came off on both ends of the floor," Kellogg said. "They shot 90 percent from the 3-point arc. We turned the ball over at some inopportune times. I don't think we made good judgments at a few different junctures. Other than the start of the first, they went on a run that I hadn't seen against our team in a while. That was not very good for us. And then we struggled to make good plays from that point on. I thought we did some decent stuff in the second half when the game was not in the balance. At least a few of the guys

fought back and did some different stuff. That wasn't one of our best showings obviously and one that I'd like to forget about."

Following a GW foul, UMass in-bounded from under the Colonial basket with 18:21 left. Gordon thought Donte Clark was going to cut left but he darted right. As Gordon's pass floated out of bounds without touching anyone, Kellogg turned to his bench and replaced his entire lineup.

"I was just looking for a little more energy. It seemed like a loose ball would go and bounce off a guy's head, they'd get it. A guy has a layup, misses

it. A wide open 3, misses it. There was just not a lot of flow or fluidity to what they were doing out there, so maybe a change would get some energy and give us a few baskets to chip away at it a tad," Kellogg said. "I don't know if we could totally come back from that deficit but I thought if we gave ourselves a little run and a little push, maybe we could strike a little fear into them. When that happens, you never know what will go on."

Gordon had no objections to Kellogg's move.

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