

Press Clippings 3/18/2018

NOTE: There were no U-46 related news stories in the March 18, 2018 newspapers.

SPORTS SECTION

---Daily Herald--- 3/18/18

Evanston leaves Larkin with 4th

BY JOHN RADTKE



Larkin's Isaiah Talley hugs teammate Victor Perez after leaving the game late in the fourth quarter during the Royals' 61-49 loss to Evanston on Saturday in the Class 4A third-place game in Peoria. PhotoNews Media/Clark Brook

PEORIA -- For the second night in a row, a quick scoring burst by the opponent did in Larkin's boys basketball team.

Trailing the Royals 15-11 just three minutes into the second quarter, Evanston went on an 8-0 spurt and never looked back, eventually defeating Larkin 61-49 in the third-place game of the Class 4A state tournament at Carver Arena.

"We took some uncharacteristically difficult shots during that run and (Evanston) was able to get out and score in transition," said Royals coach Deryn Carter, the 1998 Larkin grad who led the program to its first state final tournament and the first state trophy for a boys team from Elgin since 1955 in this, his ninth year as the Royals' head coach.

"That run changed things."

Evanston (27-6) took its first lead at 17-15 on a basket by senior Matt Hall, who finished with 14 points and 16 rebounds, with 2:52 left in the first half. With 6-foot-10 Larkin senior Jalen Shaw already on the bench with two fouls, the Wildkits were able to take over inside and by halftime they led 24-18, an advantage they stretched to an insurmountable 45-29 by the end of the third quarter.

"I didn't think our intensity, at times defensively to start the game out, was where it needed to be," said Evanston coach Mike Ellis, whose team forced Larkin into 16 turnovers. "We were able to make that a factor and get some runs. I thought our communication was a lot better. We were seeing the court better, making some plays at both ends of the floor. I thought it was a well-balanced game for us."

As they did on Friday when they trailed Belleville West by 18 points before cutting it to 7 late in the fourth quarter Larkin (24-10) again refused to give up. The Royals cut the Wildkits' lead to 58-49 on a basket by senior Anthony Lynch (21 points) but with just 38 seconds to go there wasn't enough time to draw closer.

"I think they sped us up a little, especially the start of that third quarter," said Carter. "We battled foul trouble again tonight, maybe if we're not battling that foul trouble it's a little different. I know Shaw had 2 points and zero rebounds in the first half and he finished with 19 and 7, so he could have played a heck of a 32-minute game but unfortunately he was in foul trouble and we weren't able to get it done. But he's come a long way since his freshman year and that's a testament to how hard he was willing to work."

Junior Lance Jones led Evanston with 15 points. The Wildkits hit 25 of 47 from the field compared to Larkin's 21 of 54. The Wildkits also won the rebounding battle 34-31.

"It's tough but it wasn't as tough as I thought it would be," said Carter of getting his team prepared for a third place game. "We were ready to play, we just didn't play well."

The experience of making it to state, despite the two losses here, wasn't lost on the players or Carter.

"It's been a great experience," said senior Kindrel "Nomo" Morris. "A once-in-a-lifetime experience."

"From the Larkin grad side," Carter said, "it's just been unbelievable all the people who have reached out, whether it's an email, a text message or through second or third sources about how many people are proud and they're making the city proud and they're still bleeding Royal blue. To be a part of that is awesome. I'm a part of it as a coach, but I'm also part of it as a community member. I know we did some special stuff for the city of Elgin."

---Daily Herald--- 3/18/18

Royals' hoops family sticks together through tough finish

BY JERRY FITZPATRICK

PEORIA -- The 2017-18 Larkin boys basketball players will take pride in their accomplishments in the coming weeks, but there was only sadness Saturday in the immediate aftermath of their final game together.

The Royals and coach Deryn Carter lingered in the postgame locker room as long as they could.

Hugs were exchanged. Speeches were made. Tears were shed freely.

Most of the players were still visibly emotional when they made their way to the postgame news conference. They entered the interview room beneath Carver Arena as a team, unwilling to separate in their final moments together.

Their sadness wasn't due to the 61-49 loss to Evanston in the Class 4A third-place game. They weren't happy about it, of course, but this was sadness on a deeper level.

"The emotion of these guys is the finality of the season," Carter said. "And I truly do believe that. I think our locker room was extremely emotional and I think it would have been the exact same way if we'd won. I think that's a true testament. I'm extremely proud of how emotional the locker room was because I think it shows how much a family we are creating in our program and the culture that our program has in creating that family atmosphere."

For the last three weeks that Royal Family -- a slogan emblazoned on the backs of their warm-up shirts -- thrilled Elgin fans in a way not seen in decades.

The Royals won the Upstate Eight River with only one blemish against St. Charles North, a team they later defeated for their fourth regional title in six years.

They knocked off Rockford Jefferson for the school's fifth sectional title, its first in 13 years.

Next came the most important triumph in Larkin history: a 53-46 win over Benet Academy in the NIU supersectional. The victory catapulted the Royals to the state finals for the first time.

That win against Benet would be Larkin's last, however. They played tough against eventual state champion Belleville West in Friday's semifinal before falling 64-53 and finished fourth in Class 4A after the loss to Evanston.

"I'm just proud of my team for making it this far," two-year starter Isaiah Talley said. "There's no other group of guys I'd rather make it here with and I'm proud of every single one of them because they were part of the work that we put in to get to this. I don't feel like anybody in the world would expect a team from Elgin to make it this far in the state tournament. I'm proud of every single person. I love my team."

The mood was considerably lighter three hours later when the Royals returned to the court to receive their fourth-place medals and trophy. The tears so prevalent right after the game by then had turned to smiles.

"We're just enjoying the moment," senior guard Kindrel Morris said. "We're going to soak it all in before we go home."

Carter, a 1998 Larkin graduate, hopes this run to state by a family of players will be viewed years from now as a watershed moment for Larkin boys basketball.

"I think there's levels of building a program," he said. "It starts in your own town, it starts in your own district, it starts in your own league, then your area. This is the final level of essentially cementing your place as one of the premier programs in the state. We carried ourselves every day like we are; it was just a matter of time over the last couple of years before it was known statewide.

"This is kind of like the icing on that cake, or the roof on that house or whatever analogy you want to use. Now, when you start talking about the premier programs that are boundaried programs in the state, Larkin High School is one of the best in the state."

---Courier News--- 3/18/18

Lynch Pin

Senior guard helps Larkin battle back in state semifinal loss

BY PAUL JOHNSON

PEORIA- In Belleville West's 10 games leading into Friday's Class 4A state semifinal against Larkin, the Maroons pounded away at their opponents' will, winning by 17 points or more.

Senior guard Anthony Lynch helped make sure that didn't happen to the Royals.

Although Belleville West advanced to Saturday's state championship game with a 64-53 win, Larkin displayed a special quality the Royals developed this season.

Resolve.

"It just shows a lot about our team," Lynch said. "We could have given up, but we decided to keep going. In practice, we just work our tails off and push it to the limit. I feel like we gave it our all."

Belleville West (31-2) jumped out to a 9-0 lead on the strength of three 3-pointers. Two were by 6-foot-7 junior EJ Liddell, an Illinois Basketball Coaches Association first team all-state selection.

The Royals (24-9) weathered the storm, however, keeping their deficit at 35-26 at halftime.

Belleville West opened the second half on a 12-3 spurt, however, to take its biggest lead at 47-29.

"We turned it over a lot in that stretch," Larkin coach Deryn Carter said. "I wish I could put my finger on what it was."

Instead of folding at that juncture, however, the Royals climbed back. Pierre Black's 3-pointer with 1:34 left cut the lead to 60-53.

The Royals, however, did not score again as the Maroons ice the win. Black scored 15 points off the bench, all on 3-pointers. He hit four threes in the fourth quarter.

"We were down seven and a 50-50 call didn't go our way," Carter said. "If it does, who knows with the way Pierre was shooting?"

Just as importantly, Larkin stood up when the bell rang.

"We use the analogy of a boxer a lot," Carter said. "I told the guys in the locker room, we didn't get knocked out. We lost in 12 rounds. That says a lot about our team.

"We could have gotten knocked out when we were down 18, went home with our tail between our legs. We fought. I'm very proud of the guys for that."

Lynch, who was named second team all-state Thursday, played well in his first appearance in Peoria. He led the Royals with 16 points, adding seven rebounds and four assists.

"I think it was great for our team," Lynch said. "I don't think that we had nerves. We've been in big games before. We just embraced the moment.

"Luckily we have another chance (Saturday). I think we'll make the most of it. We're here to just play."

Senior center Jalen Shaw had 11 points and 10 rebounds before fouling out for Larkin. He had to contend with Liddell and 6-5 junior Keith Randolph Jr. on the defensive end.

Liddell delivered 24 points and seven blocks. Randolph had 18 points and 12 rebounds.

The Royals plays Evanston, which lost to Young 62-56, in the third-place game at 5:30 p.m. Saturday.

"Playing in that game is hard to get up for, but we have to do it," Lynch said. "We're here for a reason. We definitely want to go out fighting, especially since it's our last game."