

Press Clippings 03/03/20

SPORTS

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South Elgin stymies Elgin

By: Jerry Fitzpatrick

South Elgin was in the zone Monday night.

A couple of them, actually.

Elgin's season is over as a result.

No. 6 South Elgin played zone defense to great effect for the entirety of a 52-29 Class 4A regional victory over No. 9 Elgin at Chesbrough Field House in Elgin.

The Storm (13-19) used a 2-3 zone defense in the first half and switched to a 1-3-1 after halftime. Elgin's top quartererly production against either look was 8 points.

"It worked really well for us and it really shut them down," South Elgin sophomore Lane McVicar said.

Elgin (5-27) shot 25 percent from the field (9 of 36), but 3-point shooting failed the Maroons. Elgin missed 19 of 21 attempts from 3-point range, including all 10 second-half tries.

"They really studied us and it showed," said Elgin junior forward Jeff Lomax, a bright spot with 12 points, 6 rebounds and 4 blocks. "We've struggled against zone all year. They really used their length to their advantage and really got after it."

South Elgin led 20-15 at halftime, thanks to a pair of 3-pointers from sophomore guard Drew Cwik and 6 points off the bench from 6-foot-3 junior Wyatt Steurer.

The Maroons made only one third-quarter basket, but they stayed within 28-21 through three quarters by holding the Storm to 4 baskets in 13 attempts.

South Elgin scored 24 fourth-quarter points to pull away. Consecutive buckets by Dylan Marquis and John Aaron Wafford extended its advantage to 37-23 with 4:12 to play.

The victory advances the Storm to an Elgin regional semifinal against No. 2 St. Charles North (21-9) on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

No. 3 St. Charles East (23-7) takes on No. 5 Streamwood (15-15) in the second game of Tuesday's doubleheader.

St. Charles North defeated South Elgin 45-27 in St. Charles on Dec. 7. Turnovers plagued the Storm in that game. Will South Elgin coach Brett Johnson play zone defense against St. Charles North and 6-foot-9 Bradley recruit Connor Linke?

"We're going to throw everything we can at them and see what we can make of it," Johnson said. "We know we can compete with them because we did it in December. We just had a lot of lazy plays from a lot of young kids. If we find ways to make our shots, we can give ourselves a chance. It's going to be a battle. They're well-tested against some extremely high-level opponents."

"We have to be disciplined," Cwik said. "The last time we played, I felt we threw the ball around. We just weren't mentally prepared for them. Well be a different team. We'll be ready to fight."

Monday's loss ended a trying season for Elgin. First-year coach Todd Allen was hired in August, well after summer ball concluded.

"We had a lot of ups and downs. A lot of teams have that," Allen said. "One thing I am proud of is they did stick together for most part and they did fight for us at times. We are proud of them sticking together because a lot of teams would have folded."

McVicar and Cwik each scored 10 points to lead South Elgin.

Effort, teamwork help Dundee-Crown overcome adversity

By: Alex Kantecki



Dundee-Crown assistant coach James Lopez huddles the team together in a post-game speech at the IHSA Class 4A South Elgin Supersectional game at [South Elgin High School](#) on Monday, March 2, 2020, in South Elgin, Ill. Dundee-Crown lost, 60-49.

Dundee-Crown's Cassidy Randl, Payton Schmidt and Katelyn Skibinski wiped away tears on their blue uniforms as they left the locker room following a 60-49 loss to Lake Park in the Class 4A South Elgin supersectional on Monday.

Still on the court, the state-bound Lancers passed around the supersectional plaque and posed for pictures.

In four years, Randl, Schmidt and Skibinski helped lead D-C to 89 wins -- or an average of 22 wins a season. They expected to be celebrating their 90th Monday, then maybe one or two more after that.

"They didn't take any of it for granted," D-C coach Sarah Miller said. "Never a satisfied attitude. They truly felt like it was a privilege for this opportunity. They had to step up in younger years when numbers were low. You just saw their growth into outstanding players and how they impacted those around them."

D-C (29-7) ended its season a win short of its second state berth and first since 1984. And, for the second time this season, Lake Park stopped a Chargers' 10-game winning streak. This one stung a bit more.

"It's been real special to be a part of this program," Schmidt said. "For it to come to an end is one of the hardest feelings, but it's also been one of the best times of my life. They're my sisters."

Randl, Schmidt and Skibinski have been on varsity all four years in high school under Miller, something that's pretty rare and worth applauding. But the three were a part of something even bigger, something the Chargers talk about after every game, win or lose: "11 deep."

No, these Chargers weren't about themselves.

Miller, in her seventh year at D-C, has never had a collection of players quite like this. All 11 are upperclassmen: eight seniors and three juniors. One sophomore, Kate Raby, was called up for the postseason run.

They welcomed her in with open arms, too. Now they just call it, '12 deep.'

The Chargers have improved in wins in each of the last four seasons. And it's probably no coincidence why, as this group has been lacing up their shoes on the same court and sharing bus rides since middle school.

That's probably why D-C didn't quit once, even when Lake Park took a 38-28 lead with two minutes left in the third quarter. The Chargers responded with a 14-2 run to take their first lead with 6:57 left in the fourth, with their season on the line.

"Being together and fighting for each other," Skibinski said. "That's what he had to do coming into this game. We have that motto, '11 deep,' and I think that's what got us this far. We got here when no one believed we could."

D-C overcame two injuries. First, a torn ACL to three-year starter Gianine Boado ended her season prematurely in December. Then, junior Arysia Harris broke her hand in January, further testing the Chargers' depth.

Seniors Emily Oldham, Erica Sanchez, Hannah Koehlert, Alaina Azar and Makayla Gotter were all up to the challenge.

"They wanted to be part of something bigger than themselves," Miller said. "Looking up videos at night, knowing they might not get into the game (the next day)."

The Chargers still have much to celebrate, even if they might not feel like celebrating right now.

D-C became the first area FVC 4A team since Huntley four years ago to play in a supersectional. That team was led by McHenry County's all-time leading scorer, Ali Andrews -- now a senior at Illinois.

The Chargers did not have one "super stud," Miller said, although junior forward Alyssa Crenshaw showed why she's one of the most dominant players in the area this postseason.

Since the start of the 2016-17 season, D-C won two Fox Valley Conference titles, two regional titles and a sectional title. The 2019-20 team, with a program-record 29 victories, cemented itself as one of D-C's best teams of all-time, not just in girls basketball.

"We didn't start as a great team," Crenshaw said. "We had to work our way up there."