

Naselle finishes with loss to Oakesdale

By PATRICK WEBB
For The Daily Astorian

SPOKANE, Wash. — It was March sadness for the Naselle boys basketball team.

At the state basketball tournament, the Comets bounced back from a second-round loss to play Oakesdale for a chance to compete for a trophy on the final day. But WIAA's smallest 1B division, dominated year-round by Eastern Washington teams, stayed true to form.

After a promising start by Naselle, Oakesdale found its groove, never giving up its lead through the final three quarters, and won 68-52.

"It was a tough day for us," said head coach Brian Macy. "We couldn't get that couple of bounces."

He had predicted his players would regroup after the second-round loss to Almira-Coulee-Hartline, and was pleased to be proved right. "We knew that they would come out with grit and resolve — the effort was there."

However, poor rebounding, which had been a pitfall all tournament, meant the Comets too often allowed Oakesdale players to try again when their shots hit the rim. "You can't give good teams second and third opportunities," the coach said.

The game began in a promising manner. After Oakesdale opened the scoring, Ethan Lindstrom and Cole Dorman both hit 3-pointers. Jacob Eaton scored from close in after some efficient passes from Kolby Glenn and Antonio Nolan, then added another.

Nolan used a clever fake to gain space for his shot and bring the score to

13-8 just as a pickup truck advertisement saying "game changer" scrolled across the stadium's reader boards. Oakesdale shifted the momentum to restrict Naselle's lead to 15-13 as the quarter buzzer sounded.

The Nighthawks came back out with new vigor, tied the score to a roar from their bench, added another basket to take the lead — a lead they would never relinquish — and then another.

At 6-4, Oakesdale senior Kieron Anderson was the tallest player Naselle faced all week. He used height and speed to rack up his game-high 22 points. Three other Nighthawks scored in double figures; only Nolan (12) and Eaton (11) matched them.

The loss came on the third day. Naselle had started the tournament well with a 54-51 win over Garfield-Palouse which began with a shaky first quarter, a steady lead, and then a nail-biting finale.

Next came a familiar buzz-saw, Almira-Coulee-Hartline, which had beaten Naselle with conviction at football late last fall. The Comets began well in this game, but just like Oakesdale, once the Warriors got ahead they held onto the lead and won 54-37.

The coach consoled and congratulated his team Friday. For seniors Nolan, Dorman, Eaton, Ian Fontanilla and Vince Fauver it was their last for NHS.

"It was a great season. I would like to thank our seniors — they brought our program a long way," Macy said. "They have put in the hard work and set the standard. I told the younger guys that they have got some big shoes to fill."

Big finish for Marist ends Astoria's season

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

The Marist girls basketball did something Saturday night that very few teams are able to do — the Spartans left the Brick House with a win, 48-39, in a first-round game of the 4A state playoffs.

Not even the No. 2-ranked Banks Braves could defeat the Astoria Lady Fishermen on their home floor this year, where Astoria had won seven straight.

And whenever someone challenged the Fishermen, they always seemed to come up with a last-second miracle shot or a fantastic fourth quarter.

There were no miracle shots Saturday, and the only fantastic finish belonged to the Spartans.

But wasn't easy.

With Marist leading 29-21 midway through the third quarter, the Fishermen reeled off seven straight points, then finally took the lead early in the fourth on back-to-back 3-pointers from Halle Helmersen and Hailey O'Brien.

It was an intense, phys-



Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

Astoria's Hailey O'Brien drives past Maggie Stephenson of Marist on her way to the basket.

ical, high-scoring battle from there.

Marist answered with a 3-pointer from six-foot sophomore Ruby Vlahov, Julia Norris scored to give Astoria a two-point lead, and a free throw from O'Brien put the Fish up, 37-34.

Scores by Maggie Stephenson and Vlahov put Marist back in front, but only briefly, as a short

jumper by Kajsa Jackson gave Astoria its last lead at 39-38 with 2:55 left.

That's where it all fell apart for the Fishermen, on missed shots and turnovers, and points for the Spartans off turnovers.

Vlahov led all scorers with 16 points, seven in the final three minutes of the game.

Her layup off a steal with two minutes remain-

ing sparked a 10-0 run to close the game for Marist, which was also 6-for-7 at the free throw line in the final 1:32. She had another score off a turnover for a five-point lead with 1:11 left.

"Too many turnovers at crucial times," said Astoria coach Mike Jacobson. "We got the lead and three straight turnovers that turned into six points for them. That killed the momentum we had built."

Helmersen scored 11 points and O'Brien added 10 for Astoria, which had seven of its 18 turnovers in the fourth quarter. Jackson had eight points off the bench.

The Lady Fishermen could be a Final Four participant next season — and definitely the Cowapa League favorites — as they return five all-league starters.

"The girls had a great season," Jacobson said. "First league championship since 2001, and first state tournament appearance in the round of 16 since 2007. They have a lot to be proud of. I told them to hold their heads high and be proud."

Knappa boys take home fifth place trophy

The Daily Astorian

It was a memorable, but forgettable two days for the Knappa Loggers, as they finished up the Class 2A boys basketball state tournament in Pendleton.

After a first-round win over Oakland Thursday, the Loggers lost two in a row by a combined 67 points, capped by a 67-40 loss Saturday afternoon to Toledo at the Pendleton Convention Center.

The Toledo Boomers could have been the Toledo "Bombers" in their win, as they were 14-for-36 from

the 3-point line. Jaydn Spangler and Mason McAlpine were a combined 9-for-21, while the Loggers were 5-of-25 from the arc.

Knappa was also missing junior Eli Takalo, who had been ejected from the loss to Columbia Christian the day before and was forced to miss Saturday's game. Timber Engblom led the Loggers in scoring with 13 points. Ty Vanderburg scored 11 points with seven rebounds.

Knights top Knappa

A nightmare third quarter for Knappa ended the Log-

gers' bid for a state title Friday afternoon, as Columbia Christian topped Knappa 81-41 in a Final Four game of the 2A boys basketball state tournament.

Knappa's return to the Pendleton Convention Center was not a fun one.

The Knights led 18-5 after one quarter, and it only got worse from there in the fourth meeting of the year between the two Northwest League powers.

Knappa was still within striking distance at halftime, trailing 36-23, but Logger comeback hopes fell apart in the third period.

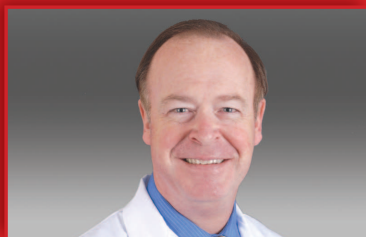
Eli Takalo scored the first points of the second half, but Columbia Christian reeled off a 21-4 run over the next few minutes for a commanding 57-29 lead.

And that wasn't the worst of it for the Loggers, who lost Takalo to an ejection and Joe Ramvick to his fifth foul in the third period. Ty Vanderburg fouled out in the fourth quarter.

Ben Gregg scored 27 points for the Knights, whose biggest lead was 43 points. Timber Engblom was Knappa's Moda Player of the Game, with 15 points and three steals.



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