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Featuring Badger, Big Foot and Williams Bay High Schools

Lake Geneva Regional News

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Chiefs end title drought

Big Foot nets first Rock Valley-South title in 10 years

By David Michels
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PALMYRA — Thursday's 53-20 win over Palmyra-Eagle was a long time coming for the Big Foot girls basketball team (18-4).

A long, long time.

With the victory, the Chiefs clinched a share of the Rock Valley-South Conference title, the school's first in more than a decade, and got a gorilla off their back, according to head coach Rick Schoenbeck.

"The first big goal that we had was to win conference," Schoenbeck said, and in order to do so the Chiefs had to put their best foot forward in every game since early December.

After dropping a road matchup with conference rival Brodhead on Dec. 1, Big Foot knew that it would have to play its best brand of basketball the rest of the way to stay in contention for the conference crown.

The girls did just that as they reeled off wins in 17 of their last 19 games, including their current stretch of 13 straight, to tie Brodhead at 14-2 in the conference.

"These girls had a lot of pressure on them to win out the conference from that loss to Brodhead, and the girls did it," Schoenbeck said. "That means a lot to the students and the girls in school. To win that conference title that hasn't been won in a decade was just a huge relief and a huge joy to the whole group that was there."

After the win, the Chiefs celebrated with conference championship T-shirts, printed before the game, but the Panthers didn't go down quietly, Schoenbeck said, surprising the Chiefs with their bruising physicality.

Honoring seniors

"They were trying to play physical with us and it slowed us down a little," Schoenbeck said of the Panthers defense, but that wasn't the only reason the Big Foot offense was out of sync.

Paying tribute to the athletes who spent their high school careers donning the scarlet and silver, Schoenbeck jumbled the starting lineup, opening the game with all four of the squad's seniors to thank them for their effort.

Starting for the Chiefs were seniors Morgan Courier, Carly Snudden, Morgan Stalker and Kaity Kelley, as well as junior Makalyn Peterson, who Schoenbeck said he wanted to give the experience of starting a game.

"It probably threw us out of rhythm for sure," the Big Foot coach said of changing the lineup, but defensively the Chiefs didn't miss a beat.

"We started a little slow, it was only 21-7 at half, but when you only give up seven points, that's pretty good no matter what you're doing."

Stout defense

The Chiefs defense kept its stranglehold on Palmyra-Eagle all night, outscoring the Panthers 32-13 in the second half.

And after a string of games in which Big Foot allowed opposing teams to score 28 to 35 points through the opening period, Schoenbeck said he was happy to see that his players are peaking at the right time; a result of the team getting back to the basics of their defensive philosophy.

Namely, keeping the ball out of the middle of the floor and pinned on the wings, and functioning as a cohesive unit instead of as five individuals.

"Five girls have to rotate," Schoenbeck said. "If you have a great trap set and nobody rotates, they're going to have an open person to pass to."

"The girls did a great job of keeping (Palmyra-Eagle) confused and off balance and that's how that whole philosophy works, five girls have to play together to be successful."

On the offensive

As for the offense, it maintained an equal-opportunity attack throughout the night, with nine girls scoring and none reaching double digits.

Leading the way for the game was sophomore Payton Courier with a team-high 9 points, as well as five rebounds, a steal and a block.

Morgan and Snudden each followed with 8 points, and Snudden pulled down five rebounds while Morgan dished a team-high four assists.

Stalker tallied team-highs in both rebounds and steals, with seven and three, respectively, while also recording 4 points and three assists.

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Senior Morgan Courier scored 8 points and had a team-high four assists for the Chiefs during their title-clinching win against Palmyra-Eagle. (Photo by David Michels/Regional News)

Badgers make final splash at state

By David Michels
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MADISON — All good things must come to an end.

They don't always end as well



Shane

as the season did for the Badger boys swim team, however, which had its season-long crescendo finally crest at Saturday's state meet in the University of Wisconsin Natatorium.

The Badgers competed in three events during Saturday's competition, with team captain Andrew Shane, senior, representing Badger in both the 50- and the 100-yard freestyle.

Badger's relay team of sophomore Emmett Mathews, senior Paul Schulz, junior Logan Rogers and Shane competed in the 400-yard freestyle relay.

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Demons make it 7 straight

Burlington co-op gymnastics wins conference title

By David Michels
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BURLINGTON — The Burlington/Badger/Wilmot gymnastics co-op is aptly named.

The Demons have haunted their Southern Lakes Conference foes for years with their dominance, and on Friday they captured Burlington's seventh consecutive SLC title at the conference title.

Burlington finished in first place with a total score of 134.375 points, narrowly edging the Waterford Wolverines who took second with 132.675 points.

Jefferson followed in third with 119 points.

Badger's Hailey Siegler was Burlington's highest scoring athlete, finishing third in the all-around with a score of 33.8 points, followed closely by Badger freshman Amara Trent in sixth place with a total score of 32.325.

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ATHLETES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ANDREW SHANE

Shane, senior and captain of the Badger boys swim team, finished in eighth place in the 100-yard freestyle at the state meet on Saturday, Feb. 20. Shane also took 11th in the 50-yard freestyle and was on the 400-yard relay team that took 22nd for Badger.

ROBERT MUTIMER & COLE MIKRUT

Seniors Mutimer and Mikrut, a pair of Badger wrestlers, reigned supreme in their respective weight classes at the Verona sectional. Each wrestler won an individual sectional title and clinched a state berth on Saturday, Feb. 20.

SPORTS

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Chiefs

Sophomore Courtney Schoenbeck scored 7 points, followed by sophomore Alexandra Demco with 6.

Peterson scored 5 points and Kelley scored 4.

Big Foot's balanced play didn't come as a surprise to the coach, however.

The Chiefs' strong play off the bench has been a boon for the team all season, Schoenbeck said, and an emphasis has been put on it from the first day of practice, way back in early November.

"I think it helps us in games where we do get in foul trouble or need the reserves to come in and actually produce, and I think our bench does produce," Schoenbeck said of the bench's ability to score. "That's something I've been trying to build all year long is, one through 10, it doesn't matter who's in there."

Sustaining the wins

One undeniable truth is that winning is fun.

And now that the Big Foot girls have won a share of the Rock Valley-South Conference title for the first time in a decade, no one in Walworth wants the Chiefs to wait 10 more years to do it again.

The key to sustaining success, Schoenbeck said, is taking things slow.

"To build a winning program you need to take baby steps," the Big Foot coach said, and then allow the team's goals to grow with the program.

For the Chiefs it started last year, reaching double digit wins and beating some of the elite teams in the conference.

This season they've already netted themselves a share of the conference crown, but Big Foot's aspirations don't stop there.

"Now, the next goal is to win a regional or sectional title, or to get to state," Schoenbeck said.

"We've got to look for bigger and better things and just expect to win conference from now on."

And Big Foot will get its first crack at achieving those bigger and better things when it hosts Evansville in its regional opener on Tuesday, Feb. 22, following the Regional News press deadline.

Prior to the contest, Schoenbeck said he's confident that the Chiefs can pull out a victory against the Blue Devils and advance to the second round.

The team just needs to play with that same confidence and stay focused on the task at hand.

The Big Foot coach said his biggest concern for his players is that they look ahead to the next game, or even their next sport.

"I'm really pushing these girls to stay focused," Schoenbeck said.

"This week is so critical. We've got some good athletes on this team and the first thing I told them was let's not look forward to the next season already, to your next sport, let it be track, softball or soccer.

"We need to go in there and just quickly take care of business and move on, do what we're supposed to do and move on, one game at a time."

Bulldogs picking up speed

Williams Bay trying to gain momentum heading into the postseason

By David Michels
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WILLIAMS BAY — The regular season is drawing to a close for the Williams Bay boys basketball team (10-11), and the Bulldogs are determined to go out on a high note.

Namely, a strong run in the postseason.

And with the regional tournament slated to begin on Tuesday, March 1, the Bulldogs are trying to build up as much momentum as possible heading into competition.

This week, that meant notching a pair of wins against Trailways-South Conference rivals Fall River and Wayland Academy.

Posting up the Pirates

Heading into Friday night's game against Fall River, Williams Bay head coach Troy Nottestad knew his team was playing well enough to avenge a 17-point loss to the Pirates earlier this season.

"I think we're playing some of our better ball," Williams Bay head coach Troy Nottestad said about his team's performance heading into the playoffs, but with a shorthanded squad, playing without junior Avery Lettenberger, it took everything the Bulldogs had to stave off the Fall River Pirates in a 69-62 win on Friday night.

"Avery Lettenberger was out, he's been sick, so one of our big post guys, starters was out, and it was close," Nottestad said after the game.

Picking up the slack for the absent Lettenberger was senior Jake Olson, who poured in a game-high 28 points as the Bulldogs powered past the Pirates.

"With Avery out, (Olson) was kind of our primary post guy and he stepped up big time," Nottestad said. "Without him in the post, I don't know if we have the same outcome."

Even buoyed by Olson's Herculean effort, the Bulldogs couldn't establish a foothold over Fall River through the first half, as both teams battled back and forth, repeatedly exchanging the lead.

Williams Bay entered halftime with the lead, but only a one-point advantage as they edged the Pirates 34-33.

Fall River continued to hang tight with the bay side squad for most of the second half as well, but, as Nottestad said, "we managed to make enough plays to win."

The Bulldogs outscored the Pirates 35-29 in the final period.

Senior Andrew Breen was second on the team in scoring with 13 points for the Bulldogs, and sophomore Eric Norton followed with 10.

Sophomore Braden O'Laughlin recorded 7 points and junior Cory Shea added 6.

Road rules

On Monday, the Bulldogs trekked an hour and a half north to face Wayland Academy, where they thumped the Big Red 70-48.

"I thought we played well, we got off to a pretty good start early on," Nottestad said, and the team never relinquished its lead.

Even playing sans Lettenberger, Williams Bay pulled ahead 34-23 in the first half and eased its way to the Bulldogs 10th win of the year, with the offense flowing from all corners of the roster.

"We called Zack Silverman up from the JV and I thought all 11 guys that we threw at them played well," Nottestad said.

All 11 players scored for Williams Bay, led by Olson with 13.

Norton scored 12 points for the Dogs, followed by Breen with 10, O'Laughlin with 8, Silverman with 6 and junior Grant Germano and sophomore Austin Pfeil with 5.

"It was nice to get everybody playing time," Nottestad said of the team's balanced attack. "Every guy we throw out there right now is capable of putting the ball in the basket, it just happens that not every night we do it. We usually try and find the hot guy, and last night everybody was able to get in the score book, which was nice, and we held the lead throughout the game."

But even more important than the win, Nottestad said, is building momentum heading into the regional tournament, particularly on the road.

Slated to be the ninth seed, the Bulldogs will be on the road throughout the tournament.

So, if Williams Bay wants to be successful, it'll need to learn how to win in hostile environments.

"It's a long road trip for us (to Wayland), but with the tournament we have to be able to win on the road now and I think last night was a decent stepping stone," Nottestad said.

"Right now we're just concentrating, we're just trying to make sure that we can focus, even though we're not at home. So we're kind of working through some things and I thought last night was a good first step."



Senior Andrew Breen drives for a layup during Williams Bay's 69-62 win over Fall River on Friday night. (Photo by David Michels/Regional News)

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