

Hounds meet their match

Northside downs North Surry in battle of high-powered offenses

By Hannah King
Sports Writer

RALEIGH — Northside-Jacksonville’s versatility in being able to score on a wide range of shots was the key factor in denying North Surry’s boys’ basketball team their first state championship in 28 years, as the Monarchs forced the Greyhounds to settle for the state runner-up trophy with an 86-67 victory in Reynolds Coliseum on Saturday night.

“I told the boys when we won last Saturday that it has been an amazing journey and that this week and this game would fly by, and it did,” said North Surry head coach Kevin King. “The entire experience has been unreal.”

Northside scored first, but Carter Phillips emerged with North Surry’s first basket. The score was 6-4 when Mason Hawks made two from the line, but then the Monarchs went on a 9-0 run throughout the game’s next two minutes. King was forced to signal for a time-out with less than three minutes left in the quarter.

Out of the break, Hawks made a basket, but Northside’s Kenny Dye posted his first two-point shot soon after. Phillips took a pass from Hawks and was fouled on a scoring drive, and turning it into a three-point play for the Hounds. With the deficit at 10 points late in the quarter, Phillips chipped in two points with 22 seconds left to go, and then Hawks pushed the ball to an open Casey Hull for his first score, leaving North down 19-13 at the end of the first quarter.

Hawks opened the second with a quick basket and pulled his team within four. However, Northside got hot again, and even with Phillips getting to the line for two more and Casey Hull scoring inside, Northside’s lead increased back to 10, and it stayed that way into the break, with the Monarchs on top 37-27.

At the half, Phillips was responsible for 15 of the 27 Greyhound points and seven rebounds. Hawks and Hull followed with six points each. Demetrius Jones held the team high for the opposition with 12 and Dye was next with nine.

Hawks and Dye exchanged layups quickly into the second half. Kendal Tucker converted North Surry’s first swish from behind the arc two minutes into the second half. Over the next two minutes for the Greyhounds, Phillips and Hull chipped in two each from inside the paint, but Northside was answering everything and then some, to lead 50-36 at that point. With three minutes left in the third quarter, King called his second full timeout, and out of the huddle, Phillips

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Lady Bears blitz to title



Jason Overby | Special to the News

The Lady Bears’ Jo Snow was named as the championship game Most Valuable player. She led several fastbreaks ahead of the Pamlico defense such as this one, and tied as the game’s high scorer with 17 points.

18-0 run lifts MA to first state title in girls’ basketball

By John Cate
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CHAPEL HILL — “If you going to beat me, beat me like that... The better team won tonight. A tribute to their defense and us not taking care of the basketball like we should.”

Perhaps the words of Pamlico head girls’ basketball coach April Rose summed it up best. The best team in North Carolina’s 1A ranks is Mount Airy, and the Lady Bears left no doubt in the state championship game.

Mount Airy went on an 18-0 run to end the first quarter of Saturday afternoon’s first championship showdown, taking a 27-6 lead by the end of the opening

period and then cruising to an almost anticlimactic 66-40 victory over the East Regional champion Hurricanes at the Dean E. Smith Center on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus.

“Before the game, I challenged them to come out strong. I thought we could make a statement, especially defensively,” said Mount Airy coach Angela Mayfield, who joined a short list of coaches who won the state championship in their rookie season. “I’m so proud of these girls, and how they rose to the occasion today.

“I don’t think anyone starts out a season thinking they’re going to be playing in the state championship game.

It just feels awesome. I can’t describe how it feels to be here today.”

The Lady Bears, who completed their masterpiece of a season with an overall record of 30-2, took the lead on the game’s first basket, a 15-footer from the baseline by Shaunae Sawyers after 63 seconds of play, and led for the rest of the night. After a 3-pointer by Arry Ward made it 5-0, Pamlico thrice cut the margin to three points, the last time at 9-6. Immediately after that basket occurred, Mount Airy answered with a long pass down the court for an easy basket by Sawyers with 4:01 left in the opening quarter.

Rose called an immediate time-out, but whatever she told the Hurricanes, it didn’t work.

By the time the Hurricanes scored again, with 6:22 left in the second



John Cate | The News

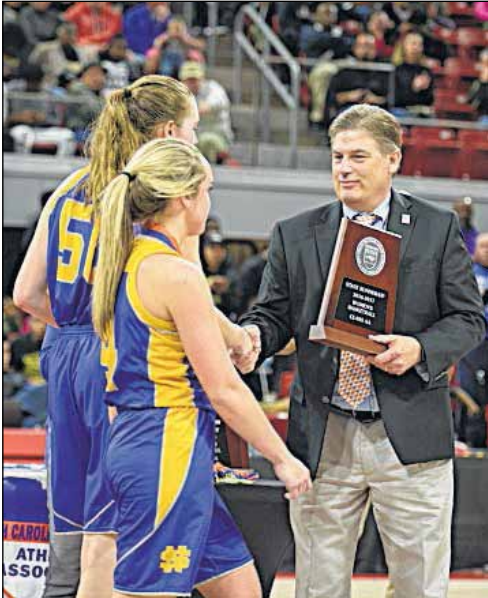
The Lady Bears’ Arry Ward gets out on the break against a Pamlico defender in the 1A state championship game on Saturday in Chapel Hill. Ward had a career-high with 15 points in Mount Airy’s 66-40 victory.

quarter, the game was effectively over. The Lady Bears, who had a 42-0 run in their season

opener 88 days before, clinched the program’s

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Boykin stops Lady Hounds one win short



Jason Overby | The News

Lady Hounds Elle Sutphin and Maggie Hawks collect the 2A state runner-up trophy following their 59-49 loss to Clinton in the finals at Reynolds Coliseum.

Clinton’s Duke-bound star nets 31, MVP honors in 59-49 win

By Hannah King
Sports Writer

RALEIGH — Led by Duke University-bound Mikayla Boykin, the Lady Dark Horses of Clinton High School used strong offensive play down the stretch and forced North Surry’s girls’ basketball team to settle for the NCHSAA 2A state runner-up trophy on Saturday night, ending the Lady Hounds’ 22-game winning streak with a 59-49 loss.

Boykin gunned in 31 points for Clinton (30-2), which led throughout the second half, and seemed to come up with an answer every time the Lady Hounds closed their deficit to just a few points.

“We have played really well together this year. I was a little bit disappointed on how our offense operated tonight, but the reason how we got here this year was

because we got so much better on that end of the floor,” said North Surry head coach Shane Slate. “We did a good job sharing the ball, taking care of it and we had great chemistry.

“Tonight was indicative of the season we had. There were times that we could have quit. We kept coming back at them, we still kept scratching at them. I was kind of like earlier in the year and losing close games, where we could have hung our heads then but we didn’t. I think that is attribute to the success of these kids playing together.”

The game started out slowly. Neither the Greyhounds nor Dark Horses made any of their first several shots. Then Boykin scored six of her team’s first eight points before North Surry could answer.

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Michigan, Vanderbilt get hot at right time

RALEIGH (AP) — Michigan coach John Beilein is seeing his team get hot at the right time of the year, solidifying its NCAA Tournament standing. The same can be said for Vanderbilt coach Bryce Drew.

The Wolverines and Commodores earned big wins in their conference tournaments against ranked teams on Friday. Michigan upset No. 13 Purdue in the Big Ten quarterfinals, and then Vanderbilt outlasted 17th-ranked Florida in overtime in the Southeastern Conference quarterfinals.

“We just want to keep winning games,” Drew said. “Hopefully the committee realizes how well we’re playing, and we get in.”

The Commodores (19-14) entered the day among ESPN’s last teams into the NAAs, and then added a sixth top-50 RPI win this season — and a third win against the Gators. They have won seven of eight.

In the Big Ten, Michigan began the day as a No. 9 NCAA seed in ESPN’s projected field of 68 after beating bubble-team Illinois in Thursday’s second round. But the Wolverines followed with Friday’s overtime win against regular-season champ Purdue to reach the semifinals.

Michigan was playing its second game since a scary mishap when its plane slid off the runway before takeoff. It led to a delayed arrival in Washington for the tournament, even forcing the Wolverines to play their opener against Illinois in practice jerseys. But they now have won eight of 10.

“I believe a lot in it,” Beilein said of getting hot at tournament time. “It’s happened to us. . . We’ve been selling the fun of a run is really — it’s irreplaceable in their lives, really. You throw in what happened on Wednesday, now they got a lot of memories. We don’t want it to stop.”

Missed chances in the Big 12: TCU and Kansas State both lost games that could’ve seriously helped their NCAA hopes.

TCU was coming off the upset of top-ranked Kansas, but lost 84-63 to No. 23 Iowa State in the semifinals. The Horned Frogs (19-15) entered the day among ESPN’s first teams out of the field and desperately needed this one.

Then there was Kansas State (20-13), which beat No. 9 Baylor on Thursday but couldn’t follow with another upset against No. 11 West Virginia and lost 51-50.

Kansas State had regular-season wins against Baylor and West Virginia on its resume and sat at No. 29 in KenPom.com’s rankings, but only at No. 55 in the RPI. The Wildcats were among the last teams in on several projected brackets, but beating the Mountaineers might have eliminated doubt.

Last chance?: California lost 73-65 to No. 5 Oregon in the Pac-12 semifinals. The Bears (21-12) are No. 54 in the RPI and fell to 1-8 against RPI top-50 teams.

8 ACC teams could make women’s field

By Doug Feinberg
AP Basketball Writer

All season, the Atlantic Coast Conference has been one of the country’s best. The reward should come Monday.

The league has a strong chance to place eight teams in the women’s NCAA field for the third time in four years.

“I’m expecting this league to win some ballgames in the NCAA Tournament,” Louisville coach Jeff Walz said last weekend at the conference tournament in Conway, South Carolina. “We have some great players, very well coached, and it’s been fun. It makes it fun as a coach, and I think it makes it fun as a player. That’s why they come here, to play against the best.”

Seven teams are virtual locks to make the field of 64, which will be revealed Monday night. Notre Dame, Duke, Florida State, Louisville, Miami, N.C. State and Syracuse have spent nearly every week ranked since December.

Virginia would be the eighth team. The Cavaliers have a quality win over the Seminoles and made it to the quarterfinals of the conference tournament. Coach Joanne Boyle starts three freshmen and the team has been getting better each week.

“I feel like we’ve been in every game, overtime with Louisville, Syracuse, beat Florida State late,” Boyle said. “We’re a young team. They’re just getting their wheels underneath them. I feel like we’re playing some of our best basketball.”

Her team has gotten the respect of the league’s coaches. Miami’s Katie Meier thinks the Cavaliers will not only make the NAAs but possibly advance to the round of 16.

“That’s how good I think this conference is,” she said. “And I’m not just saying that because Joanne is a friend of mine. I watch UVA and I’m like, oh, my God.”

It seems commonplace of late for a conference to have eight teams in the tournament. Since 1999, there have been eight or more teams from a league 13 times. The SEC had nine teams in the field last season.

The ACC, which had the second-best nonconference win percentage behind only the Pac-12, put in eight in 2014 and 2015. The conference has also had one of its current members play for the national championship in seven of the past eight seasons, including Syracuse last year.



Photos by Jason Overby | Special to the News
Lady Bears seniors Megan Fleming (15) and Sarah Lankford share a hug as time expires in the 1A state championship on Saturday in Chapel Hill. Fleming and Lankford each stepped up and played significant quality minutes during the last three Mount Airy playoff victories.

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first-ever state championship the same way.

Twenty-five seconds after the teams returned to the floor, Sarah Lankford got open on the right wing and knocked down a three. Another 25 seconds produced a Lady Bear fastbreak that Ward finished on a put-back. The lead was 10, but Mount Airy was just getting started. Madeline Mayfield rebounded a miss and stuck it back. With 1:49 left in the first, Jo Snow stole the ball and took it 70 feet the other way for a deuce. After another 25 seconds, Sawyers did likewise, and drew a foul in the process of finishing. Her bonus free throw made it 23-6. Another Sawyers steal followed, and she fired ahead to Snow from halfcourt for another two points. The team tacked on a couple of free throws before the end of the period, and the blitzkrieg ended with the Lady Bears ahead by 21.



Jason Overby | Special to the News
Mount Airy's Shaunae Sawyers was named as the finals' Most Outstanding Player as the Lady Bears took a 66-40 victory over Pamlico in the 1A state championship game.

energy.”

There would be no second-half rally. Jones, who had 16 points and nine rebounds to lead her team, could only tread water as the Lady Bears brought every weapon to bear on the East champs. Ward hit two threes in the first three and a half minutes of the third. Mount Airy led by 21 (48-27) when Lankford rebounded and threw a long pass to Snow for two, then hit a jumper from the baseline next time down. Mount Airy ended the third on a 9-0 run to lead by 30, and its lead peaked at 34 on a layup by Asherah Smith at the 3:33 mark of the fourth quarter for a 66-32 lead. Coach Mayfield cleared her bench 16 seconds later, and the only thing left to do was celebrate.

“It’s hard to maintain that kind of energy over a whole game, but we told them at halftime that we needed to come out and make a statement,” said Coach Mayfield. “They’re a very good team, their guards are very quick, and we knew they could create some turnovers if we weren’t careful. I thought we came out and had a really great third quarter, and I’m proud of how we came out at halftime.”

Snow and Sawyers led the Lady Bears with 17 points each. The former was named the Most Valuable Player of the championship game, while the latter was named Most Outstanding Player. However, they could have gotten a run for their money from Ward, who had a career-high 15 points to go with five rebounds and five steals, and Lankford, who ended her distinguished athletic career at MAHS with nine points and five rebounds in just 14 minutes of action. Smith had four points, while Mayfield and Bailey Flippen had two each.

“I still can’t believe it. It feels awesome,” said Snow, who already owns a handful of individual state titles in track and field events.

The Lady Bears will return all five of their starters next season. But when Coach Mayfield was asked about a repeat, she said that the team would enjoy what they had accomplished, and think about that another day.

“We’re going to enjoy this moment right now,” she said. “Later on this spring, we’ll get in the gym and start working at it, but we’re going to enjoy today.”

Reach John via Twitter at @johncate73.

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