

Posted on Wed, Jan. 04, 2006

PRIVATE SCHOOL NOTES

Nolan Catholic girls take a new approach

By KELLY MORRIS
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

Nolan Catholic girls basketball coach Joey Simmons has been all smiles lately, but seven games ago, the second-year coach wasn't so happy after senior captain Alexis Periera, last season's team MVP, suffered a season-ending anterior cruciate ligament injury.

The Lady Vikings had been running a four-guard system with Periera as the only post, but once Periera injured her knee, they changed to a three-guard, two-post offense.

"I was depressed for a couple days," Simmons said. "Not only did we lose the third-leading scorer and second-leading rebounder, we lost our captain. I was concerned about the leadership more than anything."

Simmons isn't concerned anymore. The Lady Vikings (18-7) extended their winning streak to eight games after winning their third Oakridge Classic title Friday with a 69-55 victory against Oakridge. Junior guards Audrey Finley and Beth Hampton, who both average double figures in scoring, were named to the all-tournament team.

Another reason for Nolan Catholic's success was 5-foot-10 freshman post Amanda Patterson's move to varsity and 5-11 junior post Brittany Mata becoming a starter to make the new offense work.

"Amanda and Brittany have done a good job picking up the slack," Simmons said. "We don't have any single superstar. We're just a good, balanced team from one to 12."

Nolan Catholic, which starts four juniors, was 6-19 through 25 games last season. The Lady Vikings opened district Tuesday on the road against Dallas Ursuline.

Developing a rivalry

The Fort Worth Christian boys basketball team defeated Brock 79-61 in the first round of the Whataburger Blue Division Tournament last season.

This year, the Cardinals had a rematch with Brock in the championship round, the furthest Fort Worth Christian has advanced in the tournament. Fort Worth Christian defeated Brock 52-50 two games before the Whataburger Tournament began but couldn't get a repeat win in the championship game.

The Cardinals lost to Brock 51-50 despite Fort Worth Christian sophomore Tommy Smith holding tournament MVP Riley Deaver to eight points.

"[Brock was] not going to succumb to anything that we did," Cardinals coach Scott Thannum said. "They just fought the whole way. So did we, but they fought one point better. Tommy just drew everybody's toughest player and did a great job in the championship game. ... He's a guard who plays a post. He is a multi-use player. We jokingly call that our ghost position."

Extra duty

Conditioning is never a question for the All Saints girls basketball team. With only eight players on the team, five of them pull double duty and play on the junior varsity team. They usually get only 20 minutes of rest between JV and varsity games.

"It's an opportunity to get extra conditioning," second-year coach Eugene Watts said. "I've been blessed that no one has been injured. I've never been more proud of a team."

Despite the shortage of players, the Lady Saints are 15-9, finished fifth in the Albertson's/Coca-Cola Tournament and aren't letting up anytime soon. They leave today for Colorado to play in a four-day tournament, hosted by Regis Jesuit, the No. 1-ranked girls basketball program in Colorado.

Also, All Saints' only senior, Margaret Smith, has committed to play at Dartmouth.

Briefly

Grace Prep's volleyball team nearly swept the year-end honors in TAPPS 1 -5A. Junior outside hitter Blaire Brueggemeyer was named district MVP and senior Whitney Cloud was named the defensive player of the year. Juniors Leslie Breslin and Lauren Purdy were named TAPPS 1 -5A newcomers, and Sandy Kelm was named coach of the year.

Nolan Catholic senior volleyball players Stacey Vitale and Blanca Machi were named to the first team in TAPPS 1-6A. Senior teammates Julie Anton and Aaron Bonnifield and sophomore Jordan Mullis were named to the second team.