

LIKE THE GOOD OLD DAYS: For many, many years, one of the fiercest rivalries in not only football but boys' basketball was Johnstown and Altoona. On the hardwood, these teams were members of the now defunct Mid-Alleghenies Conference and played each other twice a season and had some of the most brutally contested games in the area. Many in the region still recall the 1991-92 season as the teams split regular season contests, with the Trojans winning at home in front of a packed house at the War Memorial. Later in the season, when things shifted east to the Altoona Fieldhouse, things got a little more chippy as future NBA journeymen, then-sophomore Danny Fortson landed a vicious elbow to Nick Teeter's face that required Teeter to wear a protective mask the next few games. The Trojans got their revenge later that spring though, in the District 6-AAAA title game played at St. Francis. Despite an unbelievable shooting performance from the long-haired Steve Tanneyhill, Paul Litwalk's Trojans prevailed and brought district gold to Central Avenue.

Fast forward to the present day. It's no secret that this is a rivalry that's lost a bit of its luster in the past decade, even prior to the Trojans joining the LHAC. The game is only played once a season, with the two schools alternating home games. I will credit the administrations for making it a unique event as rather than playing JV games, the evening is a girls'/boys' varsity doubleheader.

It took overtime, but the Trojans defeated the Mountain Lions 64-59. In the win, Paul Weatherly had 29 points while junior Richard Agurs grabbed 13 rebounds. The victory was the first the Trojans have had over the Mountain Lions since the 2004-05 season. Coach Dave Roman Jr. should hope to have similar success as that squad as it was that team that advanced to the state championship game before being defeated by Steelton-Highspire. Of the game, Roman added the following: "It was a tremendous win for our kids and our program. Like I said in the paper and like our Assistant Coach Ryan Durham, who played for JHS and experienced the Altoona rivalry first hand, said during practice, the old-timers don't want to know what you did against the local teams, they want to know what you did against Altoona. Our kids responded!

The most impressive thing is that we did it without a game film to prepare from. We concentrated on fundamental defense in practice, i.e. guarding the post, pressuring the ball, guarding screens. We were to film Altoona's game with DuBois on Thursday. It was postponed. It was originally rescheduled for 6:00 PM on Saturday. We were prepared to go out when we saw the game time on the internet was listed as 1:30 PM.

Coach Durham also posted the Altoona Mirror article from the 2007 game against Altoona where their coach said, 'It is not much of a rivalry anymore because Johnstown is AAA and they didn't put up much of a fight.' I am sure he felt differently on the long ride home over the mountain."

HOT SHOTS: Cambria Heights remains a hot team in Section 1 play as they are 4-1 overall, 2-0 against fellow Section 1 squads. In a 66-53 win over Forest Hills last week Ian Vescovi scored 23 points and grabbed 11 rebounds while Devin Lansberry dropped 20 on the Rangers. Elsewhere in Section 1, Penn Cambria scored a 59-46 win over Bishop Guilfoyle. Josh Swope had what has to be the shooting performance of the season thus far as he tallied 22 points on the Marauders. What was more impressive was that he was a perfect 7-for-7 from the floor including 4-for-4 from behind the three-point arc. Teammate Joe Dziabo had a double-double, registering 14 points and 13 rebounds.

In Section 2, it's hard to think anyone had a better week than the afore mentioned Johnstown Trojans as they went 3-0. Aside from their Monday night win over Altoona, they took down Somerset (65-55) and Westmont (58-50). Weatherly had a pair of double-doubles in the Wednesday and Friday contests as he scored 21 points and grabbed 10 rebounds versus Somerset and scored 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds over Westmont. Agurs also had a double-double against Somerset, scoring 11 and grabbing 12 boards.

But the Trojans weren't alone in sweeping the week as Bishop Carroll also went 3-0 in a busy Monday-Wednesday-Friday week. The Huskies, coached by Cosie Aliquo, beat Windber Monday in a non-conference game 55-39 before defeating sectional foes Westmont (47-43) and Bishop McCort

(47-41). In the victory over Windber Jackie Moschgat led the way for BC with 18 points while Luke Paronish contributed 17. At mid-week, Chad Panick scored 19 while Paronish chipped in 12 in the defeat of Westmont. Rounding out the solid week for the Huskies, Panick dropped 12 while Paronish grabbed 13 boards in the win over the Crimson Crushers of Bishop McCort.

ON THE HORIZON: There is not a lot of action this week with the Christmas holiday. Monday is a busy day as all twelve league teams will take place in the following non-section games: Bedford at Johnstown, Central Cambria at Bishop Carroll, Cambria Heights at Somerset, Bishop Guilfoyle at Bishop McCort, Penn Cambria at Westmont and Forest Hills at Richland. Penn Cambria is also slated to play in the Bishop Carroll Holiday Tournament starting on 12/26.

COACHSPEAK: The Bedford Bisons scored a quality win over sectional rival Forest Hills last week, defeating the Rangers 68-59. In that win, Coach Mark Anderson had three players hit double-digits as Steven Garlock led the way with 20 points while teammates Mark Scott (16) and Zach Hess (13) also played key roles on the night. On the win, Anderson stated, "Yes we did beat Forest Hills in a close game last week. It was good to finally beat them. And also was nice to get a sectional win. We play Johnstown [Monday night]. They are extremely talented and have some great athletes. Weatherly is the best player in the LHAC and District. Our kids are looking forward to the challenge of playing such a great team."

Pat Hollern's Bishop McCort squad was 2-1 on the week and are 4-2 overall. The Crushers defeated Westmont 57-50 on Monday and Richland 57-28 on Wednesday. They ended their week on a down note, falling 47-41 to Bishop Carroll. The team seems to still be feeling things out according to Hollern: "We are a work in progress. We are still learning one another early in the season. Defensively we have been solid in the half court, but we haven't committed ourselves to rebounding the basketball."