

**MORE TOURNEY ACTION:** It was quite the holiday season for Scott Close's Somerset squad as they won games in four consecutive days which resulted in two tournament championships in a row. Last week, the Golden Eagles took the honors in the Grove City Christmas Classic. On opening night, they defeated Saegertown 81-54. It was a pretty balanced attack for Coach Close as Ryan Fisher had 22, Anthony Papini had 20, Jeremiah Judy had 11 and Cody Hemminger had 10.

In the championship contest, Somerset beat the hosts Grove City 51-47. Both Fisher and Hemminger had 17 in the win. Fisher was named tournament MVP.

Close added the following comments following his team's very successful run: "The four day stretch we had was a great building block for the rest of our season. I was concerned with the toll four game in four days would have on our players, but with the style we play and the rotation of 10-11 players in each game, we actually got better each game. It was great to see different teams from District 10 and get the opportunity to go against a top quality program like Grove City. The Championship game at Grove City was a well played game by both teams, going back and forth until we hit some key shots late in the game, including a traditional three point play by Ryan Fisher with under a minute left to play. Playing at their gym in front of a partisan crowd will hopefully prepare us for a tough January stretch and give us some help as we prepare for postseason. Our bigs are getting better each game. Fisher (MVP of both tournaments) and Papini have been solid all year, and Cody Hemminger (All Tournament selection in both) has really stepped up into his role over the two tournaments. After a few days off, we're looking forward to getting our second half of the season started at McCort."

Another LHAC squad in tourney action was Bishop Guilfoyle as they hosted their own tourney in Altoona. The Marauders defeated Tyrone 51-45 on opening night behind strong performances from Chris Brown (18 points) and sophomore Joe Mooney (11 points). They fell in the championship game against Cathedral Gaels of Ontario, Canada 65-50. Brown (11 points) and Matt Roesch (12 points) both made all tournament team.

Coach Josh Baker summed up the tourney: "The Tyrone game was the most solid all-around performance our team has had to date. We played consistent, aggressive defense for the majority of the game and executed better than we have all year offensively. I think we played a very good 13 1/2 minutes against Cathedral (Ontario, Canada). We hit a stretch during the end of the 2nd quarter and the beginning of the 3rd where we did not value the basketball and they turned our turnovers into easy transition baskets. We lost our aggressiveness during that stretch, and good teams like Cathedral will capitalize on those mistakes. Chris and Matt shot the basketball well during the Marauder Shootout. Matt has struggled with he's perimeter shot, so it was nice to see him build he's confidence and progress he's game forward this week. Chris is one of our leaders, who we rely on to do so many things, and I think he was the most aggressive he's been all year during the Shootout, and hopefully he can carry that momentum forward for the rest of the season."

**A RARITY IN BASKETBALL:** Mark Anderson's Bedford Bisons played a doubleheader over the holiday week, a rarity in the game of basketball (heck, SCHEDULED doubleheaders are a rarity in baseball these days except for the college game!). Unfortunately, Bedford dropped both ends of the twinbill, losing 59-38 to Penns Valley and 87-59 to Bellefonte. In the contest with Penns Valley, Garrett Leydig led the way with 10 points while in the loss to Bellefonte, Coach Anderson had three players in double figures (Mark Scott 18, Mike Short 13, Steve Garlock 10).

Anderson reflected on the busy day: "The Bellefonte tournament is one we would like to forget. We played absolutely awful in both games. Turnovers killed us. It was a little difficult playing back to back games but I don't think that is why we played so bad. We were missing a starter (Zach Hess) and a couple kids were battling the flu. It was a bad trip the whole way around. We probably should have stayed home. We are going to put it behind us and move forward to the next part of the season. Hopefully we learned a valuable lesson from this. We have three very tough games the first week of January with Penn Cambria, Central Cambria and Bishop Guilfoyle. I am anxious to see how we respond."

**TROJANS NO LONGER UNDEFEATED:** Johnstown was handed their first defeat of the season as they fell on opening night of the Windber Rotary Tournament to Westmont 51-49 in an overtime thriller. It was the 49th edition of the tourney in Somerset County and opening night was a "Retro Night" of sorts as current coaches played against former teams they coached in Dave Roman Jr. (now coaching JHS, coaching against his former team in Westmont) and Mike Rodriguez (now coaching OLSH but was the former coach of Windber).

In the opening game, Paul Weatherly led the Trojans with 20 points. In the championship game, OLSH beat Westmont 64-54 while JHS recovered to demolish Windber 61-31. In the win over the Ramblers, Richard Agurs had 14, Weatherly had 12 and Carlton Wyatt chipped in 11.

Westmont's Mike Valcheff was tourney MVP while James Orie and Anthony Scappe (both from OLSH), Chris Kessler (Westmont), Cameron Ursica (Windber) and Weatherly (Johnstown) made up the all-tournament team.

Coach Roman reflected on the consolation win: "I was proud of the way we came out with a chip on our shoulder and took command of the game from the get-go. We told the kids that regardless of the talent level of Windber, they will come out and work like heck for 32 minutes and we had to match that intensity. We did just that! We told them it is easy to get excited to play in the championship game. It is very difficult to get motivated for the consolation game. How motivated they come out will say a lot about the kind of team we are and what kind of athletes they are. I give a lot of credit to the kids. We came out with great intensity and never let up."

#### **NON-TOURNEY GAMES:**

- Bishop Carroll 48, Glendale 41: Chad Panick had 14 and teammate Jackie Moschgat had 13 in the win for the Huskies.
- Bishop Guilfoyle 54, Bellwood-Antis 38: Nick Johnston's 15 points led the Marauders in the victory.

**ON THE HORIZON:** As school gets back in session, the regular season in conference schedules will start to heat up. Four of the league's twelve squads will have busy weeks as they will play three games on Monday 1/5, Wednesday 1/7 and Friday 1/9. They are the following:

- Cambria Heights: hosts Bellefonte, is at Bishop Guilfoyle and then hosts Penn Cambria
- Central Cambria: at Bishop Guilfoyle, at Bedford and hosts Forest Hills
- Bishop Guilfoyle: hosts Central Cambria, hosts Cambria Heights and at Bedford
- Richland: at Windber, hosts Westmont and at Bishop Carroll

Two other big games for the week will both be hosted at Bishop McCort as the Crushers will welcome Somerset on Wednesday and Johnstown on Friday.

**MISCELLANEOUS:** This blog doesn't pretend to keep track of things in the girls' game as much as the boys' but it must be noted the nice win Bishop McCort had last week. The Class AA Lady Crushers defeated Altoona, perennial powers in Class AAAA, by the score of 63-59. Sarah Pastorek had 22 points while Emily Basile had 12 points.

**COACHSPEAK:** I recently asked Dave Roman, Jr. his thoughts on playing in holiday tournaments versus having the time off and using it to practice. "I have had experienced teams that enjoyed competing in the tournaments and did not want any time off. I remember back in 2004, we had 16 days off between games. It was a blessing because we treated it as pre-season practices. We went on to win the District 6-AA title that year. I think it is good and bad for us this year. It is bad in the sense that we have to play a conference opponent again. It is also bad because we could use some more time in the gym with practice. It is good in the sense that we are 5-0 and don't go two weeks without playing a game. I guess it depends what kind of season you are having to this point to say whether or not you prefer to play over the break."

**RANKINGS:** The Harrisburg-Patriot News finally released a regular season edition of their state rankings in basketball. Only one squad from the LHAC was given any honors thus far: Bishop Carroll's 9-1 start earned them Honorable Mention in Class A.