

SPORTS

Gator girls struggle on both ends, fall to Green Wave

Ryan Bergeron

Locked in an 10-10 game, early on in the first half versus the Class AA East Grand Forks Senior High Green Wave, the Gator Girls' Basketball team would allow the game to get away. A 13-2 Green Wave run put the Gators in a 12-23 deficit. Never able to fully recover, the Gators trailed throughout the rest of the game before eventually falling by a 56-42 final in the team's final regular season home game on February 14.

In the loss, the Gators experienced struggles on both ends of the floor.

Defensively, the Gator girls allowed the Green Wave to attempt 14 more free throws than them. At the free throw line, the Green Wave finished 30 of 43 (70 percent), and the Gators finished 17 of 29 (59 percent).

Committing 31 fouls— compared to 22 for the Green Wave— the Gators would also experience some foul trouble, highlighted by three players, including Lexie Benke, Mariah Christian, and Kinsley Hanson, fouling out of the game. Gator Head Coach Brad Dahl said the Gators need to improve both its team and individual defense.

“We try to play aggressive defense, but we haven't been doing very well moving our feet and keeping ourselves in the best defensive position...which is leading to fouls, with many of them being two-shot fouls,” Coach Dahl said via email. “We have to figure out how to play the other teams' quickest players, by playing smarter...but that's not happening right now.”

From the floor, the Gator defense allowed the Green Wave to shoot just under 45 percent and forced 17 Green Wave turnovers, compared to 23 for the Gators on the offensive end.

Speaking of offense, the Gator girls struggled shooting the ball, particularly in the first half, seeing the Gators shoot just over 21 percent (7 of 33). For the game, the Gators shot just under 29 percent from the floor. The Gators did hold a decided edge in second chance points, outscoring the Green Wave 23-2 in this department.

“We are not moving the ball as quickly as we need to, and our shooting confidence is low. We aren't getting that big shot, or spark, that we need to get us going,” Coach Dahl said via email. “We are really going to need two or three players to pick up their games and make others better, for us to make a charge come playoff time.”

Trailing 23-32 at halftime, the Gators would close to within six, at 43-49, but could get no closer.

Alyssa Rinde would lead the Gators with 18 points and posted a double-double performance with 11 rebounds. Jacey Wojchowski also hit double figures for the Gators with 11 points. Also for the Gators, Kinsley Hanson nearly posted a double-double with eight points and eight rebounds, and Anissah Novacek chipped in eight points as well.

Next Action: After falling to the Sacred Heart Eagles 42-56 on February 17 in East Grand Forks, the Gator girls end their regular season schedule with a road game versus the Win-E-Mac Patriots on Thursday, February 20.

Read next week's issue of *The Tribune* for a complete recap of the Sacred Heart and Win-E-Mac games.

Gators jump out to quick start versus Ponies

Ryan Bergeron

The Gators would get off to another fast start when it hosted the Warren-Alvarado-Oslo Ponies— a consistent sight during the team's eight-game winning streak. Led by eight points from Zac Blawat, the Gators jumped out to a 10-1 lead with 12:46 left in the first half.

The Ponies scored its first basket of the game with 12:09 left in the first half, drawing within seven, at 10-3, but wouldn't get any closer. A Kobey Dallager layup gave the Gators its first double-digit lead of the game, at 14-3 with 11:39 remaining in the half, and the Gators kept adding on before coming away with a 78-49 home win on February 13.

A key behind the fast Gator starts during the team's recent run— one extending to nine straight wins— has most often been defense, Gator Head Coach Kent Christian said. What changed or what clicked that led to the team's recent strong defensive efforts?

“I'd like to say we changed some things, but we really didn't. Guys just started playing better together,” Coach Christian said. “People don't realize that defense is kind of like offense. You got to feed off... each other, read what each other's doing and we've started to do that.”

Tonight, he didn't see his team play as strong defensively as it has played recently, but in the end it proved to be enough to help the team to another win.

“Usually it's been pretty good defense, but I think they spoiled me a little bit (lately),” Coach Christian said. “So I thought we gave up too many easy looks tonight, but (during this run, we've had) just guys playing well together.”

In this game, the Gator defense did allow the Ponies to shoot just over 56 percent (18 of 32), but forced 25 Ponies turnovers, compared to 13 for the Gators.

The Gators would also hold a decided advantage on the glass by outrebounding the Ponies 34-17, including by a 16-2 margin on the offensive glass. Kobey Dallager led the Gators on the glass with nine rebounds, including seven offensive ones.

With the Gators leading 28-15, Dallager would grab two offensive rebounds in a row on the same possession under the basket. He wouldn't make a basket, but would get fouled in the process. Dallager made both free throws, giving the Gators a 30-15 edge with 4:41 left in the first half. Besides the 9 rebounds, Dallager finished with 14 points. Coach Christian was asked about Dallager's inside game.

“That's his game. If he can get down on the baseline (and) drive, it's good to see,” Coach Christian said. “He definitely rebounds. So, he had a nice night tonight.”

With 2:41 left in the first half, the Gators held a 32-18 edge, but ended the half on a 6-0 spurt, capped by an Adam Benke fast break layup off a steal, giving the team a 38-18 lead 15 seconds before half-time. The Gators went into the break leading by this same score.

A 9-2 Gator second half run, capped by a Jaden Kostrzewski three-pointer with 11:42 left in the game, extended the Gator lead to 28 points, at 59-31— its highest lead to that point. Later, a Kaden Opdahl offensive board and layup with 5:13 remaining, gave the Gators its largest lead of 32, at 76-44.

Offensively, the Gators finished just under 52 percent from the floor (32 of 62), including just over 41 percent (7 of 17) from three-point range. As a team, it also finished with 25 assists. Benke led the Gators with 23 points on 64 percent shooting. Besides Dallager's 14 points, Kaden Opdahl and Blawat also hit double figures for the Gators with 11 points each.

Gavin Gullikson led the Ponies with 16 points. Also hitting double figures for the Ponies, Brandon Miller scored 13 points and Hunter Steer 10.

Next Action: After hitting the road to play the Stephen-Argyle Central Storm on February 18, the Gators end the regular season with a pair of home games— first versus the Lake of the Woods Bears on Thursday, February 20 and second versus the Warroad Warriors on Friday, February 21.

Robotics

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FIRST students to return to the area and work for them. For UND, sponsoring this event provides the university with exposure and is a strong “recruitment tool,” Russ Anderson explained.

“We're actually seeing kids now going to UND because of this (event),” Anderson said. “It might not be in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), but it is in something, and they're applying to UND. So, that's a cool thing too.”

As for the benefits of this event for the City of Grand Forks, it's bringing people and money into it.

“We're bringing in 1,800 of the brightest kids there are into the Grand Forks community,” Russ Anderson said, “filling up hotels. We're filling up restaurants.”

According to numbers provided by the Greater Grand Forks Visitors Bureau, last year's event brought in \$719,616 in direct business sales and just under \$1.1 million in total business sales. Of the direct sales, the top three sectors included: \$242,210 to Food and Beverages, \$185,868 to Lodging, and \$125,232 to Retail.

“It's a very, very large convention for the city of Grand Forks,” Russ Anderson said, “and so come out and see what it's all about. That's the bottom line.”

This regional is providing area and non-area students that chance to show their force in and outside the robotics arena, and giving people the chance to see what this FIRST Robotics force is all about. It's also providing sponsors a chance to catch some of that force— whether it be current Grand Forks shoppers, or future UND students or area business employees— now and potentially into the future.



photo by RYAN BERGERON

The Gators wrestlers hold up the Section 8A Championship trophy and the number one finger after defeating the Frazee Hornets 41-30 in the section title dual at Fertile-Beltrami High School on February 14. This win secured the Gators of back-to-back section titles for the first time in program history.

Gators make history, capture back-to-back section crowns

Ryan Bergeron

Gator 126-pound wrestler Brogan Beito allowed the Frazee Hornets' Lukas Volstad to score a reversal and take him down two times in a 36-second window in the second period during Section 8A Championship dual action. Volstad let Beito up again, leading Beito 8-3 at the time and looking to score more.

Volstad would get in on another shot, but this time Beito hit a move he has hit numerous times this season— a neck wrench throw— taking Volstad to his back at the edge of the mat with 1:07 left in the period. Eighteen seconds later, the Gator crowd roared and Beito jumped to his feet in celebration following a pin; the Gators led 15-3.

This dramatic turnaround later proved to help provide the difference in a 41-30 Gator victory, giving the team back-to-back section team titles for the first time in program history, but the eighth section title overall, following action at Fertile-Beltrami High School on February 14.

Asked if he felt like he was going to end it when he hit that move, Beito said yes.

“When I hit it, it was tight,” Beito said. “I could tell by the way he arched his back into it and I tripped him.”

During last year's section championship team dual, Beito didn't give up a pin, but just a technical fall, saving a team point in the Gators' 31-30 win over Frazee and getting congratulated for it. This time, he would get congratulated, but for a different and surprising reason for both him and Gator Head Coach Isaac Novacek.

“Honestly, I wasn't expecting to win going out there,” Beito said. “I knew I had to do my job and not get pinned, not give up any bonus points, and it was a big win.”

Before entering the teammate tunnel coming off the mat following his pin, Beito yelled and Coach Novacek held out two hands for a high five. Coach Novacek also let out a celebratory yell too, as he walked towards the head table to check in his next wrestler.

“He's got his one move with that neck wrench and he hit it and the kid (Volstad) is pinned instantly,” Coach Novacek said. “Right there, it took their (Frazee's) wind out of their sails and we knew something great was going to happen at that point.”

Speaking of rallying back, to get to this championship dual required a late comeback by the Gators in a 31-29 semifinal victory over the United North Central Warriors earlier that same day. Halfway through this dual, the Gators trailed 21-6 before winning five of the last seven matches, including the final three, to rally back and advance. Since his team's come-from-behind home win over the Fosston/Bagley Brownawlers, Coach Novacek has seen a consistent attitude from his team.

“It's been just a never say die attitude. Our quote has been... ‘Leave no stone unturned,’” Coach Novacek said. “And basically what that means is leave everything you got on the mat and we did it. We did it.”

Gator 152-pounder Andy Dostal explained what the message was to the team to get through these tight duals— one related to composure and a team-first mindset.

“We can't get too high with the highs or (too) low with the lows,” Dostal said. “We got to keep wrestling till the dual is over basically, and just wrestle as a team, as a whole, and not get too hung up on other matches.”

Outside Beito's victory, the team achieved this section title thanks to other emotional performances from top to bottom.

At 106, the Gators' Jaxon Janousek took a 7-0 lead into the final period over the Hornets' Cade Nagel. Five seconds into the period, Janousek threw Nagel to his back, but wouldn't record the pin until 24 seconds left. Janousek yelled, jumped up and clapped his hands a couple times before raising both his arms quickly up to encourage the crowd.

Then younger brother Danyn Janousek (113) took the mat versus the Hornets' Jake Nagel, a state entrant last season. Trailing 8-0 after two periods, Janousek scored an escape with 1:07 left in the match. Holding off Nagel's attempts to record the major decision, Janousek fell 8-1, but the Gator crowd rose to its feet, cheered, and clapped when the final buzzer sounded.

Next, Tony Olson (120) took the mat versus Christian Carlson, a wrestler Olson lost to twice— both times by six points— during the regular season. This time around, Olson rode Carlson the entire second period to go into the final period tied at 0-0. Choosing down, Olson scored a reversal with 1:35 left, but Carlson reversed Olson five seconds later, tying the score at 2-2.

Still tied, Olson scored an escape with five seconds left and held off Carlson's attempts at a winning takedown to win 3-2. Olson

flexed both his arms and yelled before walking off the mat and into the Gator teammate tunnel. This win gave the Gators a 9-3 lead, setting the stage for Beito's dramatic win.

After the Beito victory, Garrett Undeberg (132) faced the Hornets' Seth Isola, a wrestler Undeberg pinned earlier this season. In this match-up, Undeberg gave up a takedown with about five seconds left in the first period, but scored a quick reversal and two nearfall points before the clock hit zero to take a 4-2 lead.

Leading 6-3 going into the final period, Undeberg gave up an escape, cutting his lead to 6-4, but didn't allow Isola to score the tying takedown to hold on for the win. The Gators led 18-3 at that time.

After the next two matches, the Gators saw its lead shrink to three, at 18-15, thanks to two Hornets' pins. First, Damian Hanson (138) fell in 32 seconds to the Hornets' Preston Mayfield, and then Tristan Locken (145) fell in 31 seconds to the Hornets' Kaden Hiemenz.

Dostal (152) then got the Gators back on the board versus the Hornets' Brock Barlund. Leading 8-3 after two periods, Dostal extended his lead to 17-4 late in the third period.

With 15 seconds left, Barlund, still in the down position, would get called for stalling for a second time, giving Dostal another point. Attempting to record the technical fall, Dostal gave Barlund the escape with seven seconds left. With just under three seconds remaining, he recorded a takedown to secure the 20-5 technical fall. Dostal flexed both arms and raised a clenched fist to the crowd; the Gators led 23-15.

Next, the Gators' Ethan Waage (160) faced Mason Newling. Trailing 2-1 going into the third period, Waage gave Newling the escape with 35 seconds left in an attempt to tie the match with a takedown. Waage couldn't score that takedown, instead giving up one with just over five seconds left in the match to eventually fall 5-1. The Gators led 23-18.

Caleb Vacura (170) helped the Gators maintain its lead, taking down the Hornets' Danny Graham in the first few seconds of the match and pinning him with 57 seconds left in the first period. Now holding a 29-18 lead, the Gators again gave up two consecutive pins— both against two state medalists from last season. Nathan Waage (182) first fell to the Hornets' Brett Graham with 31 second left in the first period, and then Jacob Bergsnev (195) fell to the Hornets' Luke Tweeton with 40 seconds left in the opening period. For the first time in the dual, the Gators trailed, at 29-30.

After both recording pins to rally the Gators back from a 10-point deficit with two matches left in the semifinal win over United North Central, Dominik Vacura and Colten Gust would deliver again. First, Vacura (220) recorded a 56-second pin over the Hornets' Byron Kropuenske to give the Gators a 35-30 edge.

Then, hearing chants of “Colten, Colten” during his match, Gust recorded yet another Gator win-clinching pin, this time on a half nelson versus the Hornets' Wesley Kropuenske with 21 seconds left in the first period— a victory setting off a celebration amongst those in the Gator crowd and those along the Gator bench. After getting his hand raised for winning, Gust held both his arms up above his head while turning slowly in a circle.

One of five seniors on this year's team, Dostal was “speechless” when asked about what it meant to him to help lead his team to state in his final season.

“It's kind of a priceless moment for my career and for our seniors' career(s),” Dostal said. “But I guess the goal tonight was repeat as section champs and do what's never been done before.”

Asked about his team clinching back-to-back section titles, Beito responded, “It's amazing... no team's ever done it in (Badger/)Greenbush-(Middle River) wrestling, so it's cool to be the first.”

Now, the Gators will head to Crookston High School on Friday, February 21 and Saturday, February 22 for the Section 8A Individual Tournament. Then, as a team, the Gators will travel to the state tournament. The Gators open first round state Class A team action from the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul on Thursday, February 27 versus top-seeded and Section 5A Champion, the Long Prairie-Grey Eagle/Browerville Wolves at 9 am.

The Gators have made program history, but the team looks to improve off its performance as a team at state last season— one seeing the Gators go 0-2— and perhaps make even more history.

“Obviously, the ultimate goal is to win it (a state title), but we're going to start and just try to bring some hardware home at first,” Dostal said. “But we're going for it all this year.”

To view complete Section 8A Dual Tournament results for the Gators, visit page1publications.com on February 20.

The most challenging is probably the humidity in the summer, it can get too soft. Transporting it to different places can be hard too but we've found a couple of coolers that work well. As I've gotten older it has been harder to make the cakes. There are six pans with three rings to a pan. The dough has to be squeezed through a pastry bag onto the pans and then baked. Each ring is then put together with frosting which is also piped through a bag. Your hands get pretty sore. My daughter Beverly has been helping me with the frosting for a while and also has learned to do the cakes. We just made three for her son's wedding in June and also one for Sally Norton's retirement in November. I have enjoyed showing other people how to make the cakes; two of my granddaughters have made them for the 4-H and for the State Fair.

What other kinds of Scandinavian pastries or foods do you enjoy making?

I have made many other goodies over the years. I've made lefse, flat bread, krumkake, sandbakkels, rosettes, Blotkaka, which is layered cake with fruit and whipped cream, Christmas pudding, rommegrout, rice pudding, and sweet soup.

Do you have a favorite Scandinavian tradition you'd like to share?

Harry and I traveled to Norway two different times and then I went once with my daughter Janice and great niece, Carmen Hontvet. I enjoyed seeing the farm my father grew up on and visiting with relatives there. Many of them have come over to visit and it is fun to entertain them, too. I love to use my Norwegian dishes when I have company. Since starting to make these cakes I have met many wonderful people who have become friends.

Before I added the finishing touches to this post, I gave a call to Eva to chat about the story and thank her for sharing a bit more about herself, the cakes and her Norwegian heritage. (I also wanted to be sure I had all the details just right.) Bev was there for the call too, and it was interesting to learn that Eva started the needlepoint in 1983 during a trip to Norway with her husband, Harry. The type of embroidery is called Crewel and it's created with wool yarn. A detail I really loved about the scene is that it is the birth place of Eva's father, Jonas (Isane) Didrikson. It is called the “Birksdalen Glacier” located in the Nordfjord area of Norway. The needle work is a family treasure indeed!

Norwegian Cake

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Traditional Danish
Wedding Cake Recipe
(Kransekake)

1 1/2 pounds almond paste
1 1/3 cups sugar
3 egg whites slightly beaten

Crumble almond paste and mix thoroughly with egg whites. Put through cookie press, filling 18 kransekake ring that have been well buttered. Bake at 300 degrees for 20 minutes or until lightly brown.

Frosting

1 egg white, beaten frothy
4 drops of vinegar
Powdered sugar, enough to make a thin icing.

Use decorating tube used for cake-writing to make scallops on top and side of each ring as you assemble the cake tower. To assemble: put frosting on each cake and build like a tower.

Special pans are required for the lovely tower of almond rings. Traditionally the kransekake is trimmed with Danish flags or, when for a wedding, with white doves.

A bottle of wine is often placed inside the kransekake. At weddings this is the groom's cake.

Variation: Use lemon juice instead of vinegar for icings. (The well-worn cake recipe ... like so many Scandinavian recipes, the Norwegian Kransekake was adapted from the Danish version, Kransekage!)

How many cakes do you think you have made over the years? I've never kept track of how many I've made. Sometimes I would make 3 or 4 at a time for each wedding. It has become a tradition for weddings, graduations, confirmations, baptisms, and even retirement parties! The cakes have been sent to other states and to many places in Minnesota.

What is the most challenging part of the cake making process?