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West girls open sections with win over Worthington

Wiste scores 26 points

By Denny Weller
Special to The Free Press

MANKATO — There's no doubt the Mankato West girls basketball team is at their best when things move at an up-tempo pace. Wednesday night in the opening round of the Section 2AAA tournament at the West gym, the Scarlets relentless running game overpowered Worthington 97-67. Junior guard Briana Stoltzman fired in a career-high 21 points while senior

guard Holly Wiste made her final home contest a memorable one by totaling a career-best 26 points.

"It's always nice to get up 10-2 to start a game," West coach Julia Battern said. "I was just proud of our team effort to work for great shots inside. Our defense was all right, but our ability to create good looks around the basket was the difference. "Bri and Holly put the ball in the basket a lot, but it was a great effort by everyone in setting screens and getting the ball to them. I thought we picked a few moments where we needed to stop



Briana Stoltzman

Holly Wiste

and talk about things, but the girls kept the energy going for the entire game and that's what you need in the playoffs."

Wiste and Stoltzman each converted a pair of layups in the early run before

sophomore guard Lani Schoper's steal and hoop capped things. After the Trojans (12-12) closed within 14-13 on Payton Sauerbrei's 18-footer with 13:37 left in the half, freshman guard Teresa Kiewiet's inside basket triggered a 13-0 burst that produced a 27-13 advantage on sophomore forward Annika Younge's tally.

"Our transition game is strong so we just wanted to keep pushing it at them," Stoltzman, who also added six rebounds, three assists and three steals, said. "We play our best basketball when we can get out and

run. We're trying to do everything aggressively and actively to limit them inside so we can use the baseline and the sideline as defenders.

"I think those early layups brought everybody's energy up and then the flow kept going. You can't overlook anybody and we prepared for them with film and scouting reports. We really got down to business in practice. We've been practicing at pushing through everything. When there's obstacles that come into play, we just keep working hard and push through. ...

Everyone brings it at practice, that's where it really starts."

Stoltzman put through 18 points in the opening 18 minutes as the Scarlets (20-7) built a 51-25 lead at the break. Wiste added 15 first-half points before 3-pointers from Stoltzman and Kiewiet along with a pair of driving hoops from Stoltzman helped expand the cushion to 68-45 five minutes into the second half. Schoper finished with 13 points while senior forward Claire Hemstock chipped in seven

Please see WEST GIRLS, Page D2

BRIEFS

Bethany women get past Morris

MANKATO — Hanna Geistfeld finished with 17 points and 13 rebounds, as the Bethany Lutheran women's basketball team advanced to the UMAC final with a 53-43 home victory over Minnesota-Morris.

Abby Olson scored 13 points, while Kenlie Pytleski added seven rebounds for the Vikings.

Bethany (22-3) will host Wisconsin-Superior in the title game at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Bethany men advance to final

MANKATO — The Bethany Lutheran men's basketball team claimed a spot in the UMAC title game with a 92-72 home victory over Wisconsin-Superior Wednesday.

Cire Mayfield led the Vikings with 22 points and nine assists, while Brian Smith had 16 points and five assists. Jared Milinkovich added 15 points and seven rebounds.

Bethany (20-6) will host St. Scholastica in the conference championship at 5 p.m. Saturday.

The Free Press

Maryland downs Gophers late

MINNEAPOLIS — Daryl Morsell drained the go-ahead 3-pointer with 1.9 seconds left for No. 9 Maryland, capping a comeback from a 16-point halftime deficit to beat Minnesota 74-73 on Wednesday night.

Jalen Smith had 16 points and 12 rebounds, including a soaring rebound and slam with 14.5 seconds remaining that pulled the Terrapins within 73-71. Gabe Kalschur short-armed the front end of a one-and-one free throw with 12 seconds to go for the Gophers, who missed three foul shots in the final 39 seconds. Then the Terrapins hustled the ball up to find Morsell, who had 13 points and nine rebounds, for the winner from NBA range.

Timberwolves rally late to beat Miami

MIAMI — The Miami Heat get leads. They just can't hold them.

And this time, the Minnesota Timberwolves were the beneficiaries of another late-game collapse.

Jordan McLaughlin's layup with just under nine seconds left put Minnesota ahead for good. D'Angelo Russell led all scorers with 27 points and the Timberwolves added to Miami beat the Heat 129-126 on Wednesday night.

The Wolves were down by 12 with 3:59 left, staring squarely at what was about to be their 19th loss in their last 20 games.

The Associated Press

RIVALRY RAMPS UP

Cougars defeat Scarlets for section hockey title



Jackson Forderer

Mankato East/Loyola teammates celebrate after defeating Mankato West 3-1 in the Section 1A championship game in Rochester on Wednesday evening.

East/Loyola heads to state for second time in three years

By Shane Frederick
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ROCHESTER — The handshake line was more like a hug line, with happy hockey players from Mankato East/Loyola and sad ones from Mankato West taking a little extra time with each other following the first-ever section championship game between the crosstown rivals.

"Some of those guys have been my best friends my whole life," Cougars defenseman Brett Borchardt said.

Borchardt wasn't all that friendly to the Scarlets during the game, though, as he scored the game-winning goal, assisted on another and blocked a number of shots to lead East/Loyola to a 3-1 victory in the Section 1A title game at the Rochester Recreation Center.

"That kid probably had more saves than I did," said winning goaltender Caelin Brueske, a sophomore, who stopped 42 shots, including all 18 in the third period.

Since blocked shots aren't an official high school statistic, Borchardt had to guess how many pucks he got in front of.

"Enough to win the game, I guess," the junior said with a smile. "Nothing that wasn't worth it."

Said his coach, Adam Fries: "That's what warriors like him do."

East/Loyola senior Matthew Salzle scored two goals, including an empty-netter, and junior Layten Liffrig had two assists for the Cougars, who are going to state for the second time in three seasons.

West, which was seeking its first section title since 2016, got a goal from Gavin Brunmeier, and goaltender Caleb Cross made 28 saves.

"For our community, it was amazing to see," Scarlets coach Curtis Doell said, noting the crowd of 2,000-plus Mankatoans. "Obviously, it wasn't the outcome we wanted, but for Mankato it was a special night, to have both our teams battling to go to a state tournament."

Fries agreed. "We have a ton of respect for those kids, and they have a ton of respect for our kids," he said. "We see each other at the rink every single day. It was sweet for Mankato hockey to come to this one spot out of town and celebrate hockey a little bit."

The Cougars had the lone score of the first period, taking a 1-0 lead on Salzle's goal at 6:56.

Seconds earlier, Salzle was stuffed on a point-blank chance by Cross. The puck went out to



Jackson Forderer

Mankato West's Blake Waletich checks Mankato East/Loyola's Zach Lebens during Wednesday's Section 1A championship game.

the point, and Borchardt rocketed a shot off the left post. The rebound went across to the right post where Salzle was waiting to fire it in.

The Scarlets knotted up the game at 5:07 of the second period when Brunmeier fired in a behind-the-net feed from Brayden Wiese.

But the tie lasted just 54 seconds, as Borchardt put the Cougars back on top with a power-play blast from the left point.

"It really picked up our team," Borchardt said. "It was a dream come true. That's a goal I've been

dreaming about my whole life."

The score remained 2-1 until Salzle's empty-netter with 42 seconds remaining. West outshot East/Loyola 18-8 in the final period.

"It was 10 guys against 10 guys," Fries said. "No one really got their third line out there. Everyone was battling. It was a heck of an effort."

East/Loyola outshot West 12-9 in the first period, but it was 33-15 Scarlets the rest of the way.

"Sick!" Fries said of his goaltender's performance.

"For a 10th-grader to come in in such a big game is special. He had his ups and downs this season, but this was a pretty special moment for him."

The teams split their regular-season series, West senior defenseman Nate Looft said his team left everything out on the ice in the rubber match.

"It was a great game," he said. "Unfortunately, there has to be a loser."

The Class A state tournament begins Wednesday at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Follow Shane Frederick on Twitter @puckato