

GIRLS BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

'Jacks muscle way into final

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It has been quite a journey for the seniors on this year's Cloquet girls basketball team. Two years ago, the Lumberjacks won just three games. Last year they doubled that win total to six wins. On Friday night, the 'Jacks downed Hermantown 68-51 in the Section 7AAA semifinals to pick up their 20th win of the season.

"I am so proud of this group of girls and how they've stayed the course and worked so hard to get Cloquet basketball back on the map," said Cloquet coach Heather Young. "They have made all the bumps in the road worth it."

The 'Jacks struggled for the first few minutes while the Hawks came out hoping for revenge against a Cloquet team which had beaten them twice during the regular season.

"Give Hermantown credit, they came out hard and hit some shots early and we got off our game plan a little bit," Young said. "I think part of that might have been some postseason nerves, but to our girls' credit they got things figured out and started to regroup and we got back into it."

The Lumberjacks tightened up on defense and used a dominating inside game as they pulled out to a 40-27 halftime lead. Cloquet got six steals on the night by Alexa Snesrud, four from Kiley Issendorf, three from Maddie Young as well as numerous players with one or two steals.

"We just started taking it to the paint and relied on our inside game which in turn helps the outside game open up," Young said. "The nice thing about our offense is our girls are patient enough that sooner or later they are able to get some bunnies and eventually easy baskets. That first half Ava Carlson had some key put-back baskets and Alexa Snesrud had a big scoring night as well."

Snesrud led the 'Jacks with 21 points, Maddie Young had a solid night with 18 and Carlson finished with 14 points.

"Among the things I like about this team is we have more than just one or two players who can have a double-figure scoring night. We have some girls who can come off the bench on any given night and give us double-digit scoring, so that kind of depth is key to having a good season," Young said. "When we move the ball around and share the ball is when our offense is at its best."

The second half saw the Hawks try to claw back into the game, but the Lumberjacks were able to outscore them in the second 28-24 to claim a spot in Thursday's championship game.

Joining the scoring parade for Cloquet were Justice Paro and Caley Kruse with five points each, Katie Turner with three points and Kiley Issendorf with two.

The win allowed the Lumber-



Cloquet's Alexa Snesrud and Ava Carlson tangle with Hermantown's Lauryn Biondi for a rebound during Friday night's Section 7AA semifinal game in Cloquet. The Lumberjacks got the win and were set to face Grand Rapids on Thursday for a chance to make it to the state tournament.

Photos by Dan Saletel / Pine Knot Sports

jacks another shot at top-seed Grand Rapids in the section final Thursday night in Hermantown. Cloquet lost two regular season games to the Thunderhawks, 60-42 (Dec. 9) and 69-63 (Feb. 3.)

"It will be a battle and we will need to take advantage of every scoring opportunity," Young said. "They are like us and have a lot of kids who can score, but the key to stopping them is limiting the touches of Taryn Hamling."

Hamling is one of the area's top scorers, but just a week ago the Eskomos, a team Cloquet beat twice this season, put the clamps down on Hamling, leading to an impressive 43-35 win over the Thunderhawks. The Esko win stopped their 13-game win streak.

"Esko kind of gave everyone a blueprint on how to stop Grand Rapids," Young said. "If everyone just does their job, we have a good shot at winning."



Right: Cloquet's Justice Paro works through the Hermantown defense on a drive to the basket Friday.

OUTDOORS

End is nigh for fish shacks

Pine Knot News

Heavy snowfall across parts of Minnesota prompted many anglers to haul their fish houses off the ice in late February. People who haven't yet removed their shelters should keep in mind that the removal clock is ticking.

The fish house removal deadline for inland waters in the southern two-thirds of the state came Tuesday. In the northern one-third of the state—north of the east-west line formed by U.S. Highway 10, east along Highway 34 to Minnesota Highway 200, east along Highway 200 to U.S. Highway 2, and east along Highway 2 to the Minnesota-Wisconsin border — the deadline is by 11:59 p.m. Monday, March 21.

In addition to ensuring shelters are removed by the deadline, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conservation officers will be watching closely to make sure people don't leave trash behind. Commonly left items include bait, blocking material, bottles, cans, cigarette butts and plastic bags filled with waste. As wheelhouses have proliferated across the state, there also have been increasing instances of people dumping sewage atop the ice.

"Some of the things people leave behind are downright disgusting, and anything people leave on the ice has the potential to be an eyesore at best and an environmental concern at the worst," said DNR conservation officer Garrett Thomas, who is stationed in Eagan. "The message is simple: Don't leave anything behind when you leave the ice, and make sure to dispose of it properly. It's not any different than the lessons we've been taught since we were kids."

The fish house removal deadline doesn't mean anglers no longer can use them. After the deadline, fish houses may still be on the ice, but they must be occupied if they're out between midnight and one hour before sunrise. Shelters may not be left or stored at public accesses. As they venture out, anglers should always remember that ice conditions may vary widely and that ice is never 100-percent safe.

Regional exceptions to the removal deadlines are Minnesota-Canada border waters (March 31) and Minnesota-Wisconsin border waters (March 1).