

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Lady Cards win last game

STAFF WRITER
PHIL GALLETT

Entering the last weekend of the regular season, the St. John Fisher Lady Cardinals hoped to grab the final place in the Empire 8 championship tournament. However, a loss to Utica Friday night, paired with RIT's upset of Elmira, left them out of postseason contention for the first time since 2001.

The Cardinals came out strong against Utica, (10-4) leading most of the first half and trailing by only one point at the break. They were not able to overcome a 12-3 Utica run early in the second half, losing 65-55. Offensive rebounds and the failure to convert lay-ups were a couple determining factors that head coach Phil Kahler felt contributed to the loss.

"We have a great group of girls and they are very young," Kahler said after the loss to Utica, "Sometimes they don't know how good they are. They came out well, but lost some of their killer instinct late in the game. Utica was able to take advantage of that."

Juniors Ashley Dean and Allison Boehm both played 40 minutes for the Cardinals and scored 17 and 14 points respectively, while senior Mary Francis contributed 12 points, eight rebounds and seven assists. Their efforts, however, were not enough to stop a resilient Utica team, led by standout guard Mallory Davis. The sophomore scored 28 points in 32 minutes, noted by Kahler for consistently using her quickness to find seams in the Cardinal defense and get to the basket.

"She was definitely the best player on the court," Kahler said. "But we knew coming in that she could have a good day because she had a good game against us last time. We still could have contained their offense by playing more confident down the stretch."

If confidence down the stretch of the game was something that Kahler was looking for from his team, he certainly found it in the season finale against Hartwick. Entering the game, Fisher was on the verge of breaking a 31-year streak of winning seasons under Kahler and losing their lone senior, Mary Francis.

Early on, it seemed as if both of these variables wouldn't be



Brad Waters

Freshman center Mary Kate Comfort scraps for a rebound against two Utica players.

enough to motivate the Cardinals to victory. Perhaps a little shaken from the previous night's loss to Utica, Fisher fell behind by as many as 19 points. Hartwick's 40 point offensive explosion in the first half led to Kahler searching deep into his bench for the right combination of players to combat the onslaught. As they entered the second half trailing 40-26, the Cardinals were desperately in search of something to turn their day around.

Whatever it was, Kahler doesn't take any credit for it.

"I don't take any credit for anything I or any of the coaches said at halftime," he said. "Our girls went out and proved what they can do. The players stepped up. They knew they didn't have much else of a choice."

Starting the second half on a 15-2 run, Fisher rallied behind its lone senior, taking the lead with just over 10 minutes left to play in the game, the season and potentially her career. It was a lead they would never relinquish. The Cardinals dominated the second half with their trademark 1-2-2 full court press, hindering the Hartwick offense that was so efficient in the first half.

"Our senior night was very emotional this year because we

only had one senior," Dean said. "Mary led our team on and off the court and we know how much we are going to miss her. We had a rocky season but yesterday's game showed how much heart we had by coming out in the second half and turning the game around. It was a good way to end the season."

Francis led the team in scoring in her final game, along with junior guard Ashley Napoleone, each contributing 16 points. Francis also had four rebounds and two assists in her last college game.

Francis' diving steal at half court which led to a basket for Fisher, cut the lead to one point and changed the tempo and momentum of the game.

"That play showed everyone on the team how bad she wanted to win," Kahler said of Francis, "Mary played better than she ever has."

Rallying behind their leader, a plethora of players stepped up in the second half for Fisher. Boehm scored 15 points 5 assists and 7 rebounds. Fisher also won the battle of the boards, out rebounding the Eagles 50-38. They received strong play in the paint from freshman Mary Kate Comfort, finishing the game with a double-double, 10 points and 11 rebounds. Freshmen Melissa Kannelley and Jessica Ainslie both contributed eight points.

Although their post-season hopes came to a disappointing end the night before, the Cardinals emotional win over Hartwick proved their class and dedication to each other. They finished the season with a 13-12 overall record, going 7-7 in Empire 8 play. They extended a streak of 31 winning seasons to 32 and established a solid foundation for their 15 freshmen to build upon for the future.

While he is excited for the future, Kahler commented on his team's up and down season.

"I was very pleased with the effort the girls put forth this season. This was a very close group of players. They were a pleasure to work with and I was happy to see them to succeed for themselves, not for me."

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COMMENTARY

Hockey deserves D-III



Joe DiProgetto

The players meet with their respective teams at mid-ice. Currently the Cards play at the Skating Institute of Rochester.

STAFF WRITER
JOE DIPROJETTO

It's about time for the St. John Fisher club hockey team to get some recognition, especially after winning the UNYCHL championship.

Not only is the team and its coach passionate about the sport, but its fans at the Skating Institute of Rochester (SIR) showed their support for the Cardinals all season. This demonstrates evidence of the eventual success hockey could have as a Division III sport at Fisher.

Imagine an ice rink on Fisher's campus, filled to capacity by parents, students and faculty cheering on the Cardinals as they host their first Division III hockey playoff game. Of course this couldn't happen immediately but it sounds like an electric atmosphere doesn't it?

Currently the progress of the team is severely hindered. Each player has to chip in \$500 for ice time, equipment and travelling. The Fisher Athletic Administration should take notice because if Fisher were a true D-III team, it would have the potential of recruiting even more skilled hockey players to add to this freshman class, or even just future students who

are fans of the sport.

Fisher is starting to become a prominent school in the Division III sports scene and could reap the benefits of the success.

Along with the football team reaching the national semifinals this year and the basketball team making the Elite 8 last year, Fisher hockey could provide the College with even more national exposure if given the opportunity to play at the next level.

Having yet another potential dominant Division III sports team as part of its athletics department could provide the College with the help it needs to one day reach its goal of becoming a university. More students would chose to come to Fisher because of the passion and prestige Cardinal sports demonstrate year after year.

If all goes as planned for Fisher hockey, student ambassadors in the future may be giving tours of a hockey rink on campus, while pointing proudly at banners hanging from the arena's roof that read, "St. John Fisher College, Division III Hockey Champions."

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TOP SHELF

Biron not for sale

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR
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He's Canadian, but doesn't carry the "eh" which is the trademark of the accent. Instead, it's a methodical tone that never wavers in pitch, while stretching his jaw muscles to their limits.

He has the rambling ability to turn one 'yes/no' question into an entire press conference.

Even if he totaled your car, stole your girlfriend and punched you in the face, you still couldn't get mad at him. It's like Dr. Evil trying to get mad at Mini Me. Impossible.

He is the one athlete that should be granted a free pass to whine about playing time, skip practice and demand a trade.



But he is no Allen Iverson.

Instead, Buffalo Sabres backup goaltender Marty Biron is the lovable fan favorite that nobody wants to see dealt away as the trading deadline nears. Unfortunately, that trade is becoming likely. After Buffalo lost center Paul Gaustad for the year and right wing Maxim Afinogenov for six weeks, the pressure on general manager Darcy Regier to trade Biron for some offensive depth escalated tenfold.

If this transpired, the Buffalo Sabres would never be the same. Who else would join Neil Diamond on "Sweet Caroline" every third period, while cozily nestled into the far left seat on the bench? Who else would talk trash to Eric Staal for 'not staying on his feet' in the NHL playoffs? And most importantly, who else would heroically step in for a struggling Ryan Miller to calmly get the Sabres back on track dur-

ing the season?

Last season, when Miller hit a mid-season slump, head coach Lindy Ruff simply plugged in Biron and the baby-blue-eyed assassin rolled off a franchise-record 13-game winning streak. And it's been more of the same this year as Biron recently led the Sabres to three key division wins after Miller stumbled through a 2-4 drought. The time off allowed Miller to refocus as Buffalo recaptured the best record in the NHL.

Not many teams have the luxury of this quick fix. Like a pitcher in baseball, hockey goaltenders get run down. Biron's instant relief is an element that could carry Buffalo to the Cup. He's the real-life version of Julie "The Cat" Gaffney in D2. Take that Anaheim.

After sitting in the shadow of Dominik Hasek and now Miller, Biron could spark an ESPN fren-

zy by refusing to accept his second-fiddle role. Oh wait, ESPN doesn't care about hockey, my bad. Nevertheless, Ruff has a humble ace in his bullpen that isn't harassing management for a lucrative deal like sport's ultimate reliever Mariano Rivera...typical Yankee. Biron's unselfishness symbolizes Buffalo's blue-collar modus operandi and his value is undeniable.

Like Tamagotchies and Pogs, trends hit hard and fast in this country. And in the revamped NHL, the winning trend is carrying two starting-worthy goalies. Carolina won last year's Stanley Cup with their regular-season backup, Cam Ward dominating through the playoffs. This season, a handful of the league's best teams (Buffalo, Nashville, Anaheim, San Jose) rely on this switch-hitter method. You just couldn't play with pogs without a 'slammer,' right?

But it's human nature to want more. At 29-years-old, Biron isn't getting any younger. As a pending free agent, he knows a big pay day and a lead role is waiting somewhere. But despite having Chris Drury and Daniel Briere as free agents next offseason, Regier must make Biron a priority and show him the money. Scorers come a dime a dozen in the team's AHL Rochester American talent pool. Dominant goalies aren't so abundant. A Miller-Biron duo spells D-Y-N-A-S-T-Y in downtown Buffalo.

And hey, if for nothing else, shelling out \$5 million is worth hearing Biron sing Neil Diamond alone.

"Good times never seemed so good. (So Good! So Good! So Good!)"

(As of press time Biron was still a Sabre. Darcy Regier wouldn't return my calls.)

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