

SPORTS

Wave falls to unbeaten Nighthawks

By LAURA MCCUSKER AND JASON TUREK
The New Milford Times

The New Milford boys basketball team established one of its goals of the season by collecting eight victories in just 10 games to earn a spot in the state tournament. Last Friday, it looked to put itself up near the top of the South-West Conference standings as it traveled to Newtown High School in front of a packed house to take on the undefeated Nighthawks.

half. "We have to limit our turnovers," said Luchsinger. "When we didn't do that, they capitalized."

The Wave had tough luck all night with its shots as it had good opportunities, but had many shots rim out. Still, New Milford went to a trap zone and flustered Newtown as it was forcing turnovers of its own in the third quarter. Some of its shots were going down and putting a bit of momentum on its side, as Shane Edmond scored six in the quarter to cut the deficit to 14 at 41-27. The Wave, though, couldn't keep it going offensively and the Nighthawks went on a 13-6 run from the end of the third quarter to the beginning of the fourth to end any threat New Milford had.

"I thought we got shots that we wanted. We did what we wanted to do," said Luchsinger. "They just wouldn't fall. It was just one of those nights."

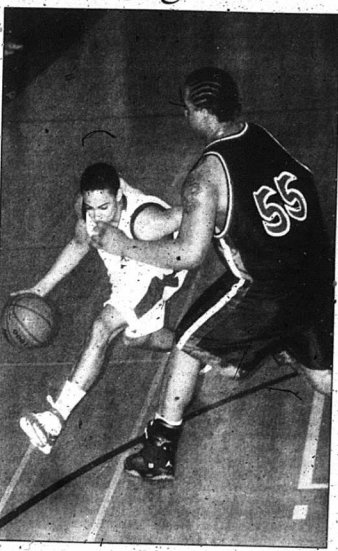
Mike Maher was a big part of Newtown's success. He effectively scored a game-high 20 points, including four 3-pointers, while PJ Cochrane hit two threes to end up with 14. Edmond and Xavier O'Rourke led the Wave with 10 points apiece, while Scott Rossell had eight points and grabbed 14 rebounds.

Bulldogs hang on for win

On Tuesday, the Wave faced another big test in Bunnell. The Bulldogs, who hold huge height advantage over the Wave, capitalized on that disparity, took control down the stretch, and played to an 84-74 win.

The Wave got off to a strong start, holding a 25-17 advantage after the first quarter. The shots were landing for New Milford, as the home team managed to get around the Bunnell defense.

Thomas O'Rourke and Andy Ventresca led the way with seven first-quarter points apiece, followed by Xavier O'Rourke with six. The Wave played aggressive defense in the opening minutes, and managed to keep Bunnell's Terrill Coward away from the hoop. Coward is the Bulldogs' big man inside, and as long as he was boxed out, as big a part of the Bunnell offense was kept in check. In his place, Chris Rosario stepped up, launching shots from the outside, and



The Wave's Xavier O'Rourke goes up against the defense of Bunnell's hulkier Terrill Coward in Tuesday's game. Despite being outmanned, O'Rourke scored 25 points against the Bulldogs.

finishing with 11 of his team's 16 points.

The height and strength of the Bulldogs, however, would inevitably come into play, and began making a difference late in the second quarter. Coward tossed in two buckets in the final minute, and the Bulldogs made a late run to trail by just one, 41-40, at halftime.

"It's difficult to stop Luchsinger said of Coward. "If he gets the ball inside, he's going to score. We tried our best to stop the vision of the guards to stop them from getting him the ball."

Easier said than done. As if worrying about one big scoring threat wasn't enough, the Bulldogs have other weapons, like Ryan Butler, who, when boxed out, was just as capable of launching a perimeter shot to get his points. Butler and Rosario combined for seven 3-pointers.

"It didn't help that the Wave ran into foul trouble in the second half. Russell and Ventresca were being forced to ride the bench for a while, with both fouling out in the game's final two minutes. Rosario also fouled out, but he got most of his offensive damage done in the first half.

"They're a big team, and we're not, and that made a difference. Not only are their kids big, they're athletic," said Luchsinger. "We gave a good effort, we got good looks and got the shots we wanted. We had a good first quarter, but we have to play all four quarters."

The win gave Bunnell records of 8-4, 4-1, while the Wave fell to 8-4-3.

New Milford was scheduled to play a non-league contest against Derby on Thursday, after press time, and hosts Notre Dame-Fairfield on Tuesday.

Have a story idea or game results?

Send them our way. Team schedules, rosters of photos to Laura McCusker, Sports Editor. The New Milford Times at: house: 201-860-3542; fax: 201-860-2150; e-mail: 201-860-2150.



Photograph by Laura Gobaroni

In a furious battle under the hoop, the Wave's Samantha Dougherty (4) and Emilia Crowcroft (21) vie for ball control in last Friday's match-up with Newtown.

Wave girls drop two

By LAURA MCCUSKER
Sports Editor

After starting off the season with four straight wins, the New Milford girls' basketball team has fallen into a bit of a slump, having lost its last three. The Wave battled to an overtime loss against Joel Barlow last week and since then has dropped two more in the past week.

It's starting to look like a repeat of last season, when the Wave also slumped in January, going 2-6. That squad recovered to go 4-1 down the stretch and grab an SWC berth.

Newtown 47
New Milford 38

Bunnell 39
New Milford 34

Results B2
Schedule B2

Loss to Nighthawks
Last Friday night, the Wave suffered its fourth loss of the season, dropping a 47-38 decision to Newtown.

The Nighthawks had a deceptively benign record of 4-7 going into the match. The front end of Newtown's schedule was full of strong teams like Kolbe-Cathedral and Notre Dame, dragging its record down in the process. The Nighthawks are always competitive, however, and Wave coach Devon Parker knew they'd put up a good fight.

"They're a good team," he said after the loss. "They've already played a lot of tough teams, which is why they only have four wins."

Field goals were nearly even between the two teams: 15 for the Nighthawks, 13 for the Wave. It was the small things mounting up - travels, turnovers, shooting just over 50 percent from the line - that did the Wave in.

"They were killing us. In a game like this, every travel, every turnover, is magnified," said Parker. "A travel can be huge in basketball. In a blowout it doesn't matter, but it's big in a game like this."

The Wave led after just one quarter, the first, outscoring Newtown, 12-7. The Nighthawks' strategy early on was to take the ball to the perimeter and shoot, something they did time and again. Newtown uncorked more than a half dozen shots from 3-point range in the first eight minutes and made none of them. Meanwhile, the Wave's Samantha Dougherty carried her team in the opening quarter, netting eight points in the first.

In the second, all that outstanding Nighthawks' shooting began paying off. Sarah Kelley hit twice from beyond the arc, as did Katie Power. The Wave was outscored by an 18-10 margin, but 3-pointers by Cassie Novicky, Hayley Currie and Meg Johnson helped keep New Milford in the game, trailing 25-22 at the half.

The home team was hurt by those travels and turnovers in the third and in the fourth, it was foul trouble. New Milford had behaved itself very well up to that point, but in the game's last four minutes, the Wave was whistled for nine fouls to Newtown's two. The Nighthawks consequently made the Wave pay for its indiscretions, going 16-for-7 from the line in the fourth. Overall, Newtown was 11-for-13 in free throws, the Wave 8-for-15.

After tying it up at 34-34, as Kelley sank two foul shots with 2.7 seconds left in the third, the Nighthawks held the Wave to just four points in the final quarter.

Kelley, who scored in every quarter, was the game high-scorer with 23 points, while Power had 17. Dougherty was the only Wave player to hit double figures, with 12 points.

"All in all, a game that hopefully his team can learn from. Other than that, it was one Parker would like well," the coach said. "The travels and turnovers killed us. It wasn't a pretty game, and things like that decided it. We've won ugly games, but couldn't pull this one out."

Outlasted by Bulldogs
On Tuesday, the Wave traveled to Stratford to take on Bunnell, and left with a 39-34 loss.

The way the first quarter played out turned out to have an effect on the final score. Bunnell outscored the Wave, 16-8, and even though that was the Bulldogs' biggest offensive quarter, they held on for the win. The home team scored a total of just 13 points in the second half, but since the Wave couldn't manage to get much going offensively either, that early Bunnell lead played a crucial part in the win.

Johnson's eight points was enough to make her the Wave high-scorer. Though New Milford didn't get the points it needed for the victory, it was hot from the outside, with four players picking up 3-pointers. Johnson hit twice from beyond the arc, with single buckets from Novicky, Kaitlyn Flynn, and Maria Ortiz. Bunnell's Eryn Miller was the game high-scorer, with 17 points.

The Wave, now with a 6-5 overall record, plays at Lauriaton Hall tonight, and at Notre Dame-Fairfield on Tuesday.

Newtown 70
New Milford 43

Bunnell 84
New Milford 74

Results B2
Schedule B2

The Green Wave sought to supply Newtown's perfect record with its first big test of the season, but it was not meant to be on this night as New Milford was on the losing end, 70-43.

"They're pretty good," said New Milford coach Jim Luchsinger. "They made a lot of shots tonight. They had to shoot probably 30 percent."

The Nighthawks (11-0, 4-0) made 23 shots on the night, including seven from 3-point range compared to New Milford (8-3, 3-2), which connected on 15 shots and made only one from beyond the arc. Most of the damage was done in the first half, as Newtown drained four 3-pointers, and forced the Wave into turnovers that led to baskets at the other end of the floor. Jason Smith had three steals in the first quarter and was the spark as Newtown went off a 9-0 run.

After New Milford opened the game by scoring the first three points. The Nighthawks extended the lead to 19-8 at the end of the first quarter and pulled away in the second half as they outscored New Milford, 19-10, to lead, 36-18, at the

Shepaug swim beats Gilbert

By JOHN TORSELEO
Contributing Writer

The Shepaug swim team continued to fill along with an easy, 103-74 win over Gilbert in a Berkshire League meet Tuesday night at home.

Shepaug won all but two events against the over-matched Yellowjackets.

Individual winners for the Spartans were: Caroline DeLuca in the 200-Free, Griffin Brown in the 1M, Mike Caridi in the 50-free,

Travis Morse in the butterfly, Patrick O'Brien in the 100-free, Mike Pierson in the 500-free, and Megan Pierson in the backstroke.

The Shepaug 200-medley relay team of Morse, Troy Horigan, Zach Gillespie and Caridi, and the 200-free relay team of O'Brien, Caridi, Troy Horigan and Sarah Kelly were also victorious.

Shepaug swims at Northwestern Saturday night at 7 p.m.

Shepaug 103
Gilbert 74

Schedule B2

The New Milford Times

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

Highlights

Steinmetz has been a force to be reckoned with in the 8L this season. She's averaging 10 points-per-game, taking down an average of 15 rebounds per game, and six blocks per game. Her highest offensive output this year was a 59-point performance in a win over Thomaston.

Coach's Comments

Steve Schibi says, "Sam has been everything to this team. She's our floor leader, and she's our vocal leader. She's a very emotional kid who takes the game seriously, no one wants to win more than she does."



SAMANTHA STEINMETZ

Class: Senior
Sport: Basketball
School: Shepaug Valley



MICHAEL BELLAGAMBA

Class: Senior
Sport: Wrestling
School: New Milford

Highlights

Bellagamba is on the brink of setting new records at New Milford. He has 141 wins, 10 shut-out of the school record, and 78 career pins, just five away from a new record. He placed first at the New Milford Tournament last week, the third time he's done so. Academically, he's in the top 5 percent of his class.

Coach's Comments

Daryl Daniels says, "I can't say enough about Michael, his work ethic, and his desire to do well. He always does his best. I don't think he cares about winning as much as feeling he gave everything he could. He's had what may be the best overall wrestling career in New Milford history, and we've been lucky to have him."

Coaches may submit their choice for Athlete of the Week by calling Sports Editor Laura McCusker at 860-354-9261, ext. 155.