

# SPORTS

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## BILLS GET OK FOR STADIUM LOAN

• BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The Buffalo Bills moved closer to landing \$200 million in NFL funding to help finance their bid to build a new stadium, a person with direct knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Friday.

The NFL's stadium and finance committee backed the Bills' request for what's called a G4 loan, by recommending the team's application be presented at the league's owner meetings for final approval, the person said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because the decision was made privately.

The committee's approval was anticipated, and it will require 24 of the NFL's 32 owners to formally OK the loan during a vote scheduled to take place on Monday.

## BROWNS' WATSON DEFENDS HIMSELF

• BEREA, Ohio (AP) — **Deshaun Watson** sat stoically behind the microphone, and for nearly 40 minutes barely talked about football.

This wasn't the time. It's unclear when that will be.

Facing pointed questions about sexual misconduct allegations brought against him by 22 women, Watson, one of the NFL's top quarterbacks, defended his character and denied any wrongdoing Friday while being introduced by the Cleveland Browns.

Wearing a dark pinstriped suit and orange tie, Watson showed little emotion at the dais while saying he has never mistreated women and vowing to earn the trust of his new team and a fan base conflicted over his arrival.



## PIAA CLASS 2A GIRLS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

NESHANNOCK 62, SOUTHERN COLUMBIA 56



# Missed opportunity



**SOUTHERN COLUMBIA'S LOREN GEHRET** walks off the court as Neshannock's girls basketball team celebrates winning the PIAA Class 2A Championship at the Giant Center in Hershey on Friday.

## Tigers go down swinging in defeat to Lancers

By **ARTHUR DOWELL**  
Press Enterprise Copy Editor

HERSHEY — Southern Columbia didn't go down without a fight, turning an early fourth-quarter, 13-point deficit into a two possession game with just over one minute remaining.

The Tigers, unfortunately, couldn't get closer than five, falling to Neshannock, 62-56, in the Class 2A girls basketball championship.

The loss snapped the Tigers' 20-game winning streak dating back to Jan. 14. They finish 29-2.

"We could be sitting at home and not even be having a medal," Southern coach Kami Traugh said. "We're still one of the top two teams in the state, and there are a lot of positives to take away from this sea-

son. There's only one happy team out of this game, and unfortunately, it wasn't us."

Southern went on a 10-1 run, spanning just shy of 3½ minutes to close within 56-51 with 1:15 left to play. The Tigers couldn't close the gap further, and much of that was due to not driving home shots that fell for much of the season. They missed close range shots, including layups, a trio of free throws and when times got desperate, a pair of 3-pointers.

The Lancers, meanwhile, did what they had to do to keep the Tigers at bay. They made their last six free-throw attempts and shut down all but Loren Gehret — who scored the Tigers' final five points — on defense.

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**ABOVE LEFT:** Southern Columbia's **Summer Tillett**, center, puts up the shot between Neshannock's **Mairan Haggerty**, left, and **Neleh Nogay** during the fourth quarter of Friday afternoon's PIAA Class 2A Championship at the Giant Center in

Hershey. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Southern Columbia's **Loren Gehret**, second from left, goes around Neshannock's **Megan Pallerino**, left, to put up a shot in the third quarter of Friday afternoon's game at the Giant Center in Hershey.

Press Enterprise/Jimmy May

# PIAA CLASS 2A GIRLS BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP



**ABOVE LEFT:** Southern Columbia assistant girls basketball coach **Dave Fegley** sits on the team's bench while waiting for the PIAA Class 2A State championship to start Friday at the Giant Center in Hershey. **ABOVE CENTER:** Southern Columbia's **Cassidy Savitski**, right, hugs coach

**Kami Traugh** after Traugh put the silver medal around her neck following their loss to Neshannock on Friday. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Southern Columbia's **Colby Bernhard**, right, puts a shot up past teammate **Summer Tillett** during the first quarter of Friday's game.

## Wax off: Assistant won't get a shine

By **ARTHUR DOWELL**  
Press Enterprise Copy Editor

HERSHEY — Southern Columbia assistant girls basketball coach Dave Fegley — who has been a huge help for us over the last year-plus — has been no stranger to outrageousness this season.

It's a common tradition to cut the nets after winning big games, but for Fegley and the Tigers, they traded the scissors for clippers.

Fegley promised his players that if they won the District 4 championship (check), they could give him a mohawk. If the team clinched a spot in the state championship (check), they could buzz his entire head. Had they won on Friday, the team then had permission to wax his head.

Safe to say, it's a shame we don't get to see if his head turns as orange as a basketball this summer.

### Future is bright

Though the loss will sting for quite some time, the Tigers will bring back all but four players. Two of those — Summer Tillett and Colby Bernhard — were starters in the title game with Cassidy Savitski getting a lot of playing time. Mackenzie Palacz is the other.

Safe to say they leave a winning culture behind with all four also being members of the Tigers' back-to-back state championship soccer team.

"Back-to-back state champs in soccer and them getting to play in this game is definitely something to remember," Tillett said. "I'll always remember this the rest of my life."

### So were his shoes

Going back to assistant coach

Fegley for a moment. He was hoping the Tigers' trophies were going to match his bright gold shoes. That wish never came into fruition, so one can't blame him if he decides to retire them — that is, if he believes in jinxes.

### Going out in style

As mentioned in the game story, Tillett arguably saved her best for last, recording a team-high 20 points and 13 rebounds.

"Summer gives 110% when she can. I wanted her to drive so we can get some fouls on top of that," Southern coach Kami Traugh said. "It's her senior year and she gave it all that she could."

Tillett averaged 10.9 points and 12.3 rebounds per game leading up to the state title.

### Tigers motivation?

Neshannock coach Luann Grybowski was intrigued at how the Class 2A bracket was playing out. The Lancers were 32 minutes and a strong Tigers team away from a rematch against Mount Carmel — 54-43 winners over the Lancers in last year's title bout.

Despite not getting the rematch, she had all the motivation she needed to make sure District 4 didn't top her squad again.

"I had left the silver medal on the ball rack all year so they were reminded that they finished second last year," she said. "They didn't even want to take the silver medals home last year."

### 4-for-(District) 4

Since the PIAA hosted a girls basketball tournament in 1974, only three District 4 teams — Lourdes

in 1994, Elkland in 1996 and Mount Carmel last season — have won the state title. The Tigers hope to follow more in Lourdes' steps, falling in the final in 1993.

The apple wouldn't fall far from the tree as Loren Gehret and Colby Bernhard's mothers played for those Lourdes squads.

### Returning production

The Tigers will no doubt miss their four seniors, but with Alli Griscavage (16 ppg and 12.3 rpg) and Ava Novak (12.2) averaging double digits and Gehret right behind (9.6), don't expect the offense to skip a beat.

If anything, the experience of fighting and clawing on the biggest stage could set them up for another big year.

"We kept saying in the timeouts 'don't give up' and they didn't give up at all," Traugh said. "You can't ask for anything else but that."

### Couldn't keep up

Southern has allowed 60 points in a game five times all season with two of those occurring in games that went to overtime against Mount Carmel (68-66 in triple overtime) and Bloomsburg (64-62).

Southern won three of them, including against Bishop McCort (84-64) in the state quarterfinals.

The other loss? At Loyalsock (60-43) for the Tigers' lone regular season loss.

"We tried limiting shots, going from man to zone and back to man but they're like us and have multiple people who can score," Traugh said of Neshannock. "Their shooting percentage [42.2%] was great tonight and ours [36.8%] wasn't."



**SOUTHERN COLUMBIA'S ALLI GRISCAGAVE**, right, pulls down the rebound while drawing the foul from Neshannock's **Megan Pallerino** during the first quarter of Friday afternoon's PIAA Class 2A Championship at the Giant Center in Hershey.

## Tigers 'We're still one of the top two teams in the state, and there are a lot of positives to take away'

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"They were here and ready to go," Neshannock coach Luann Grybowski said of the Lancers. "They were a lot more nervous than I thought they'd be. Once we took a 13-point lead I thought we were set. Then they hit a couple of shots and it's a game again."

"We didn't transition well from press to half-court man."

That press defense did something not many teams can say they did: gave Southern fits.

Alli Griscavage entered the title game leading the team with 16 points and 12.3 rebounds per game. She still had a strong performance with 12 points and nine rebounds, but with all-state player Mairan Haggerty — a fellow 6-foot, 1-inch player — and Megan Pallerino (5-11) defending, they made those seemingly easy shots all year that much tougher for Southern — which did out-rebound the Lancers, 40-29.

"We knew we were going to be outsized," Traugh said. "We were hoping that we could get some more outside shots, but they play good man and we just had to move some more."

"Alli is our top scorer and top rebounder, but we were getting points from a lot of other girls. Her fouling out wasn't the issue for me, it was us as a team not boxing out and doing what we had to do defensively, and that's as a team."

With the Tigers taking away the inside for much of the contest, the Lancers adjusted nicely by moving the ball around until a girl was left wide open. That player was often found beyond the arc, with the Lancers draining nine 3-pointers. Four of those occurred in the third quarter, helping them carry an 11-point lead into the final frame.

It also helped them take their lead for good with 4:40 in the first, hitting a pair of treys after Ava Novak started the contest with a 3-pointer of her own.

Despite never regaining the lead, the Tigers did tie things at 19 by going on a 6-0 run to start the second quarter. Tillett and Gehret helped keep the Tigers close by scoring eight first-half points apiece.

"It's a big stage and I feel once they got comfortable, we started playing our game," Traugh said. "I think that's what led to that second-quarter run."

Gehret finished with 13 points. "They're a good team," Grybowski said. "[Summer Tillett] was better than what I saw on film, as was [Loren Gehret]."

The Lancers had three players — Haggerty (23), Addilae Watts (12) and Aaralyn Nogay (12) — finish with double figures. The trio accounted for seven 3-pointers.

SOUTHERN COLUMBIA (29-2) 56	
Alli Griscavage	5 2-3 12
Summer Tillett	7 6-8 20
Loren Gehret	5 2-4 13
Ava Novak	2 1-2 7
Colby Bernhard	2 0-0 4
Mackenzie Palacz	0 0-0 0
Cassidy Savitski	0 0-0 0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21 11-17 56</b>
NESHANNOCK (29-2) 62	
Megan Pallerino	3 1-4 9
Mairan Haggerty	7 6-10 23
Neleh Nogay	1-6 4-6 6
Addilae Watts	4 2-2 12
Aaralyn Nogay	4 2-2 12
Camdyn Cole	0 0-0 0
Hunter Newman	0 0-0 0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>19 15-24 62</b>
Southern	
11	14 10 21 — 56
Neshannock	
19	11 16 16 — 62
3-point goals:	
Southern Columbia	3 (Gehret, Novak 2)
Neshannock	9 (Pallerino 2, Haggerty 3, Watts 2, A. Nogay 2)
Fouled out:	
Southern Columbia	— Griscavage, Savitski.



**ABOVE:** Southern Columbia's **Alli Griscavage** takes a seat after fouling out in the fourth quarter of Friday afternoon's state championship game in Hershey. **RIGHT:** Southern Columbia's **Brooke Carnosky**, right, hugs **Mackenzie Palacz** following Friday's loss to Neshannock. **BELOW:** Southern Columbia's girls basketball team poses with its second-place trophy Friday.

PHOTOS BY JIMMY MAY

