



The Oak Leaves



Regular Season Ends for Spartan Hoops Teams

Women's team advances to postseason, men's team begins offseason

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Following last Saturday's games at Hanover, the regular season came to a close for both the Spartan men's and women's basketball teams. While the men's team is nearly a week into its offseason, the women's team has been preparing for the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference (HCAC) Tournament, which tips off tonight at 6 p.m. when Manchester faces Bluffton in the opening game.

At Hanover, the Lady Spartans fought hard, but they came up short, losing to the second-best team in the HCAC by a final score of 70-77. Nonetheless, head coach Josh Dzurick believes that the team played well. "When you're playing a team as good as Hanover on the road on [their] senior day, you have to really give it your best effort," he said. "We gave a good effort; it just wasn't good enough to beat a quality team." Despite the loss, the team remained fifth in the conference standings, having already clinched its berth into the HCAC Tournament with a 66-57 win at Defiance on Feb. 18.

On the whole, junior shooting guard Justin Kruger is pleased with the team's regular season performance, in which the team finished with an overall record of 13-12 and a conference record of 10-8. "I'm pretty happy with the outcome," she said. "I'm glad that we won our senior night and the [Main View Tipoff Tournament]. Those are all big memories for our team and the seniors."

Dzurick is also satisfied with the team's effort throughout the season. "I'd love to see the record a little bit more on the positive side," he said. "But at the end of the day, it's about getting into the tournament



HALF-COURT Senior guard Jocelyn Hamilton crosses into the offensive zone during Manchester's home game against Mount St. Joseph at Stauffer-Wolfe Arena on Feb. 14. The Spartans were victorious on their senior day, defeating the Lions by a final score of 60-45. The women's team faces Bluffton tonight in the opening game of the HCAC Tournament. Tip off is set for 6 p.m. at the Clive M. Beck Center on Transylvania's campus.

Photo by Savannah Riley

and being ready to play in the tournament. And I'm very happy with where we are at."

Manchester has played in the conference tournament in each of Dzurick's 10 seasons as the head coach, and he believes that playing with a high level of energy will be crucial. "I always feel like the teams that want it the most win the tournament," he said. "You have to be able to play hard for 40 minutes. The extra energy makes a difference in the hustle plays, loose balls and rebounds."

"There's no 'cupcakes' in the tournament," he added. "Everybody is good. We just need to outwork them for 40 minutes." [By cupcakes, Dzurick was using a slang term for weak teams that are easy to defeat.]

Despite the challenges that await Manchester, Dzurick is excited

about the team's chances of making a successful run. "When we're on our game, we're the definition of a team," he said. "We are usually very successful when everybody's executing their roles, no one is caring who gets the credit and everybody's giving it their best effort."

Dzurick also believes that the team's veteran leadership is another one of its major strengths, as five seniors and three juniors on the roster have played in previous conference tournaments. "The younger players can draw on their experience," he said.

Throughout the week, the team went about practice as usual without making any drastic changes to its normal routine. "At this point in the season, it's about fine-tuning what you've been doing," Dzurick said. "You can't get too creative. It's about trying

to get your bodies healthy and fresh, and making sure that you're ready to go."

The tournament, which is being hosted by Transylvania University at the Clive M. Beck Center in Lexington, Ky., will continue throughout the entire weekend. If Manchester defeats Bluffton tonight, they will face Transylvania, the top seed of the tournament with an unbeaten record in conference play, in a semi-final matchup tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m.

While the women's team has shifted its focus on the HCAC Tournament, the men's team is already looking ahead at next season.

On Saturday at Hanover, the Spartans lost by a final score of 72-83, which ended their season on an eight-game losing streak. "The team played hard and well at Hanover," said former head coach Brad Nadborne. "From a

fan's perspective, I'm sure it was a good game to watch, with both teams really competing. We kind of ran out of gas and came up on the short end."

Despite the team's unfavorable end to the season, Nadborne felt that team made positive strides over the course of the year. "I saw a lot of improvement, both from a team aspect and from certain individuals getting better from the start of the season to the end," he said. "The two players that really come to mind in terms of improvement are Matt Brown and Chase Casteel. Needless to say, they made significant contributions to the team, especially on the offensive end of the court."

Junior forward Keith Berry also had several positive takeaways from this season. "I feel like we were one of the top five teams in the league on the offensive end," he said.

"We stayed positive and we didn't give up."

Nonetheless, Berry believes that the team needs to work on its defense extensively. "Once we get that down pat and put everything together, we'll be one of the top five teams next year," he said.

Nadborne concurred. "The key for a successful season next year will be the improvement that the team makes on the defensive end of the court," he said.

In addition to making improvements on defense, the team looks to develop into a contender for the conference tournament. "I just want to win," Berry said. "I want to help my team get better and help them reach the tournament next year."

Nadborne agrees with Berry. "The goal for next season is to put the program in a position that it will be competing night in and night out at a championship-level," he said.

With the offseason currently underway, the team will be focused on individual improvement. "The team's plans for the offseason are for the players to individually work on their games, getting better as ball handlers and shooters," Nadborne said. "Also strength training is an integral part of offseason improvement and the guys will be challenged to come back in the fall both bigger and stronger."

In the end, the men's team finished with an overall record of 5-20 and a 4-14 record in conference play. They finished tied with Franklin for eighth place in the HCAC.

Additionally, the team will need to find a new head coach for next season since Nadborne has stepped down from the role.



Students Visit Disney World for Jan. Session

THE MOST MAGICAL PLACE ON EARTH Psychology professors Marcie Coulter-Kern and Rusty Coulter-Kern pose for a quick photo with their students outside the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. The classes visited Disney World for a week during January Session, yet maintained an academic schedule throughout the duration of the trip, with assignments and class meetings held every day. The topics of the classes were leadership strategies, social science and customer service.

Photo courtesy of Professor Marcie Coulter-Kern