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West Word Web Exclusives



Top 10 team falls to Lady Wolves in Holiday Showcase

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The girls varsity basketball team gave head coach Anthony Konsewicz an early Christmas present with two victories in the annual Suburban Holiday Showcase.

Sophomore guard Jewell Loyd led the team with 24 points and 13 rebounds, and senior G Allie Guiang sank four late free throws to ice a 39-34 second round victory over 10th-ranked Trinity last night at Lake Zurich.

In first-round action last Saturday, Loyd scored 18, and senior forward Jaclyn Gremley added 16 as the Wolves defeated Loyola 39-25 at Stevenson.

Combined with last Friday's 59-53 defeat of Central Suburban League South (CSLS) rival Evanston Township (ETHS), the Lady Wolves stand 13-2 on the season (3-1 in the CSLS).

The victory over ETHS came on the heels of a 54-40 non-conference victory over Highland Park. Despite a slow start, the team finished with a flourish to seal the win.

"We felt good about coming out with a victory, and we took care of business," Konsewicz said.

The victory over Trinity is the team's second over a top 15 team thus far, including a decade defining win over 13th-ranked New Trier, "the first victory over New Trier in 11 years," according to Konsewicz.

Versus the Trevians, Loyd tallied 25 points, ably supported by senior G Kelly Kleppin and fellow captain Gremley with 15 and 13, respectively. Guiang chipped in with 9.

In addition, Konsewicz said that senior G/F Jennie DiJohn and junior G Nicole Moy "came off the bench and [played] some great minutes."

The rare win over the Trevians left Konsewicz elated.

"[Our defeat of the Trevians was] a tremendous team effort with the defense limiting their top scorers," Konsewicz said. "Offensively, we were clicking on all cylinders."

Gremley agreed.

"Everyone was dominating, hitting shot after shot, and everything just started falling into place from there," she said.

Kleppin explained that the team "prepared" for the Trevians in practice, and "knew that we had to come ready to play."

The team's strategy?

"We pretty much shut down two of their best players," Kleppin said. "We [played with] intensity, and we never stopped adding to our lead. It was one of those games where we knew that we put all our effort into winning, and it felt great."

According to Guiang, experience has been the key to the team's impressive start.

"Having the five starters all returning varsity ballplayers really gives our team an advantage."

In earlier action, the Wolves competed in the Deerfield tournament on Nov. 21-28 and finished the five-game round robin with a record of 4-1. The Wolves beat North Chicago 75-35, Zion-Benton 60-37, Grant 44-19 and Waukegan 56-26. Despite a 40-36 loss to Lake Forest, Konsewicz was pleased with the team's effort in the tournament.

"We really played well against Zion-Benton," he said. "Zion was one of the best teams we played."

A combination of energy and intelligence was the key to the team's solid showing in the tourney, Guiang said.

"We really just played with our hearts but also played smart," she said. "We focused and did the little things right. We wanted [to win] and so [we did]."

Loyd concurred, saying that the team played with "high energy" the entire game. She averaged 22 points per game for the tournament.

The team and its coach expressed optimism about the remainder of the 2009-10 campaign. Guiang attributes the team's success to the "great chemistry" they have together.

"We all have each others' backs," Guiang said.

Kleppin agreed, saying "we don't look past any teams, but rather just work hard to want [a win] more than [our opponent]."

Konsewicz echoed Kleppin's sentiments.

"If we play the way we are capable of playing, we feel as if we can win every single ball game," Konsewicz said.

The Showcase will continue through Monday, Dec. 28, with the Wolves still to face Lake Zurich, Barrington and Stevenson in the round robin event.



Junior guard Laurie DiJohn shoots a three pointer against district rival Niles North.

Photo by Sarah Espinosa