

Laube paid tribute to father at state

Written by Jim Ecker

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DES MOINES - Marion coach Corby Laube was hoping to wear his special purple shirt for one more day at the girls state basketball tournament in Des Moines, but he won't get the chance.

The seventh-ranked Indians saw their historic season end in the semifinals of the Class 4A tournament Friday with a 54-48 loss to No. 8 Pella at Wells Fargo Arena.

Laube has been wearing a purple dress shirt at games in honor of his father, Harlen, who has been battling Alzheimer's disease for several years and is living in a care facility in Cedar Falls.

Mia Laube, one of Marion's top players and the coach's daughter, said her younger sister Kayba selected the shirt around Christmastime for their father to wear in tribute to their grand-father.

"He wore it for the first time to the Alzheimer's game in honor of my grandpa," she said Friday. "It's kind of become his good-luck charm to know that our grand-pa is with us."

Mia Laube remembers her father wearing the shirt when the Indians defeated Center Point-Urbana during the regular season, a victory that helped Marion tie for the West Division title in the Wamac Conference.

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Laube said he wore the shirt when the Indians defeated No. 15 DeWitt Central and No. 6 North Scott in the regional tournament and he wore it again Wednesday when the young Indians upset No. 3 Harlan in the quarterfinals of the state tournament.

Laube wore the shirt again proudly Friday in honor of his father, who was one of his coaches growing up.

"This would have been his thing," said Laube, referring to the big stage in Des Moines, "but he's not able to be here because of that (the illness). It's been hard."

Laube said he actually has two purple shirts, so he would have had a fresh one if the Indians (20-5) had reached the Class 4A finals. Instead, Pella (23-2) will face ninth-ranked Mason City (17-8) for the title.

Marion moved into a 29-29 tie with Pella late in the third quarter on a 3-pointer by Maddie Knapp, but Pella scored the last five points of the stanza and the first four points of the fourth period to grab its biggest lead at 38-29.

The young Indians, with three sophomores and two freshmen in their starting lineup, battled back and drew within a single point at 45-44 on a baseline drive by Knapp with 1:45 left, capping a 15-7 run.

"Our coaches kept looking at us and they would say, 'You're fine, You're fine,'" Mia Laube said. "And we knew that we've played enough games in our lives that being down nine wasn't anything.

"We could hit shots, we could make free throws. We believed in each other. It just didn't end up

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the way we wanted."



Pella took a 48-44 lead, but Laube made it 48-46 with a driving bank shot with 42 seconds left. Pella made two foul shots for a 50-46 advantage, but Laube hit two free throws with 27.7 seconds remaining to make it 50-48.

Katie Vander Molen made two free throws to give Pella a 52-48 lead with 22.5 seconds to go. Marion missed a 3-pointer and the Dutch got two more free throws from Kiara Bradley to clinch the victory.

Marion matched the best season in school history by reaching the state semifinals, also accomplished in 2008. They were riding a 12-game winning streak before the year ended in Des Moines.

"We're pretty proud of what we did this year, but we know that we're capable of doing more, even as far as we got," said sophomore point guard Chloe Rice. "We want to keep going."

The Indians used three freshmen, four sophomores and one junior in Friday's game. Pella also has a young team and used one freshman, three sophomores and four juniors. Neither team put a senior on the floor.

"We feel great about what we accomplished," Coach Laube said. "Winning the Wamac Conference and making the state semifinals and coming down here and playing well, we feel great about that."

"That doesn't mean that we're satisfied," he said. "We fell short of our goal of winning it all, but

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we accomplished a lot of good things. We're excited about the future. And we think Marion basketball is going to be a force for a while."

Many of Marion's players will be hitting the AAU circuit this spring and summer, working on their games and building for the future.

"We're for sure going to come back even harder," said Caitlyn Smith, a member of the talented sophomore class. "We know we have a good-looking future ahead of us."

Laube led Marion with 12 points and Rice scored 11. Vander Molen topped Pella with 15 points. Bradley finished with 13 points and 12 rebounds.

MARION (48): Rice 3 4-4 11, Smith 1 0-0 3, Wright 2 0-0 4, Laube 4 4-4 12, Willette 2 0-0 6, Knapp 3 0-0 7, Herold 1 0-0 2, Sade 1 1-2 3. Totals 17 9-10 48.

PELLA (54): Pingel 0 4-4 4, Bradley 4 4-4 13, Buchheit 1 4-6 6, Vander Molen 5 3-4 15, Van Vliet 3 0-1 7, Lambert 1 0-0 3, Wichhart 0 0-0 0, Holterhaus 3 0-0 6. Totals 17 15-19 54.

Halftime - Pella 24, Marion 20. 3-point goals - Marion 5 (Willette 2, Rice 1, Smith 1, Knapp 1), Pella 5 (Vander Molen 2, Bradley 1, Van Vliet 1, Lambert 1).