

Marion sinks DeWitt Central in regional

Written by Tom Fruehling

Sunday, 21 February 2016 00:11 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 February 2016 07:28



Marion's Maddie Knapp sees herself like The Little Engine That Could. With her team stuck Saturday night trying to get over the hump against DeWitt Central, the 5-foot-3 freshman came to save the day.

Coming off the bench as the Indians were ahead by just three points midway through the third quarter, Knapp was fouled attempting a long 3-pointer. She coolly drilled all three throws.

"I was a little nervous," she acknowledged afterward. "But if you think you can do it, you can do it."

Displaying the same calm under pressure let the Indians escape with a 47-38 home-court win over the pesky Sabers in a Class 4A regional semifinal.

Riding an 11-game winning streak, the seventh-ranked Indians (18-4) travel to North Scott of Eldridge (18-4) Tuesday with a state tourney berth on the line.

The sixth-ranked Lancers manhandled Clinton 60-17 on Saturday.

Marion sinks DeWitt Central in regional

Written by Tom Fruehling

Sunday, 21 February 2016 00:11 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 February 2016 07:28

"They're good," Marion coach Corby Laube said of the next opponent.
"But that's all right. We'll be ready."

As was the diminutive daughter of Marion softball coach Beth Knapp when given her chance to shine.

Right after hitting the three key free throws (while making just 11 of 23 for the season), she forced DeWitt turnovers on the next two possessions.

And 30 seconds after coming back into the game in the fourth quarter, Knapp nailed a 3-pointer to give the Indians a more comfortable 39-30 lead.

"I like to come in off the bench," she said. "They say I add a little spark."

"My goal is to play tough defense. Get some stops first and give us a chance to score."



Marion sinks DeWitt Central in regional

Written by Tom Fruehling

Sunday, 21 February 2016 00:11 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 February 2016 07:28

Scoring came hard for both teams to start the game as the Sabers led only 9-7 after a quarter.

The Indians committed six traveling violations in the first few minutes alone and missed several buckets under the basket.

"I think we were a little too excited," explained Marion sophomore Chloe Rice, who topped all scorers with 17 points. "But once we settled down a little bit. We started shutting them down, started running our offense a lot better."

Laube said the team knew coming in that the Sabers would be a challenging second-round foe.

"They're not 15th ranked for nothing," he noted. "The play solid defense and just try to grind you down. They're well-coached and well-disciplined."

"We didn't shoot as well as we'd like. But we just told the girls to keep battling and keep doing the right things."

That included surrounding the Sabers' 6-foot-1 all-state center Amanda Brainerd every time she touched the ball.

"She's tough inside," said Rice, one of several Indians who converged on her. "We just tried to engage her."

Brainerd led her team with 16 points after being held to just two baskets in the first half. She also was called for a technical foul after throwing an elbow on a rebound try under the bucket with 40 seconds to go in the half.

The Indians then scored five straight points to take a 23-18 lead into halftime. They led the rest

Marion sinks DeWitt Central in regional

Written by Tom Fruehling

Sunday, 21 February 2016 00:11 - Last Updated Sunday, 21 February 2016 07:28

of the way.

DE WITT CENTRAL (38): Roling 3 3-6 10, Saunders 0 0-0 0, McNamara 0 0-0 0, Brainerd 6 4-4 16, Cornelius 1 0-0 2, Small 2 1-2 5, Gaston 00-0 0, Kinney 1 2-2 4, Murphy 0 1-2 1. Totals 13 11-16 38.

MARION (47): Rice 6 5-8 17, Smith 3 0-0 8, Wright 0 3-4 3, Laube 1 2-3 4, Willette 1 0-0 3, Knapp 1 4-5 7, Herold 1 0-2 2, Sade 0 3-4 3, Jordan 0 0-0 0. Totals 13 17-26 47.

Halftime – Marion 23, DeWitt Central 18. 3-point goals – DeWitt Central 1 (Roling), Marion 4 (Smith 2, Knapp, Willette). Fouled out – none. Technical foul – Brainerd.