

SPORTS

# Third Quarter Run Boosts Longwood Over Lady Tigers

By Tom Allegra

Coach Rich Castellano knew before tip-off of the game that his Lady Tigers had to come out strong. In its last two meetings with Longwood this season, Northport came out flat and was never able to get back into the game.

But in their opening round playoff game at Longwood February 19, the Lady Tigers didn't skip a beat from their morale-boosting win over Sachem in the season-finale: Northport shot well and played inspired basketball at the outset of the game.

But thanks to senior guard Dawn Klein, Longwood was able to step it up a notch higher, using a 19-8 third-quarter run to take the lead and control the tempo for the remainder of the game. Klein keyed the run scoring eight points during the surge and 18 of her game-high 26 points in the second half to lead the Lady Lions to a 60-49 win - and eliminating the Lady Tigers.

"She was unbelievable," said Castellano of Klein, who didn't score 26 points in the previous three games against Northport combined. "We had to stop [Longwood senior forward] Asya Cotton and other girls. The one we didn't expect is the one that hurt us."

Midway through the first quarter, Klein dropped in her first of five three-pointers to put Longwood up 7-6. But Northport freshman guard Jackie Lukas matched her play for play, scoring seven points during an 11-2 Northport run to put her team ahead 17-9 only three minutes later. Lukas, who led Northport with 18 points, capped the run when she knocked down a trey with :50 showing in the first quarter.

But almost every time it seemed Northport had Longwood on the ropes in the first half or closed their deficit in the second half, the Lady Lions had an answer. Klein hit another three-pointer with 3:38 left in the second quarter, and Cotton brought the Lady Lions within a point on a great third effort to end the half.

Longwood's third-quarter run gave the Lady Lions a 40-30 edge with less than a minute remaining in the stanza, but Northport didn't quit. A Lukas trey quickly brought the Lady Tigers within five points only a minute into the final quarter. Lukas had a chance to then cut the lead to three when her team regained possession, but her shot fell way short and Klein made Northport pay, draining her final three-pointer of the game a minute later and following that with a lay-up on a transition break with just under four minutes remaining. Klein made five of six free-throw attempts to end the quarter, as Northport could never pull within seven points the rest of the way.

Sophomore Brienne Watkins (12 points) added a solid effort for Northport, and was followed by senior forward

*"When you beat a team who's better than you, then you realize you're better than you think you are."* -Rich Castellano  
Lady Tiger Head Coach

Kerry Beach (11 points) in the scoring column. But both Beach and junior point guard Lauren Amen, only one game removed from their season bests against Sachem, were denied easy baskets and fouled out. Amen dropped in only a deuce, as she felt she was being guarded a little too tightly by her Longwood counterparts. Even still, Amen held Cotton to only seven points.

**Notes & Quotes**

Castellano hoped his team would ride the crest of the Sachem win, but wanted his team to be focused for Longwood at the same time.

"We had to remember the Sachem game," he said. "We also had to forget it."

One reason to remember the win: it told the Lady Tigers what they were capable of doing.

"[The Sachem win] helped us validate our season," Castellano said. "When you beat a team who's better than you, then you realize you're better than you think you are."

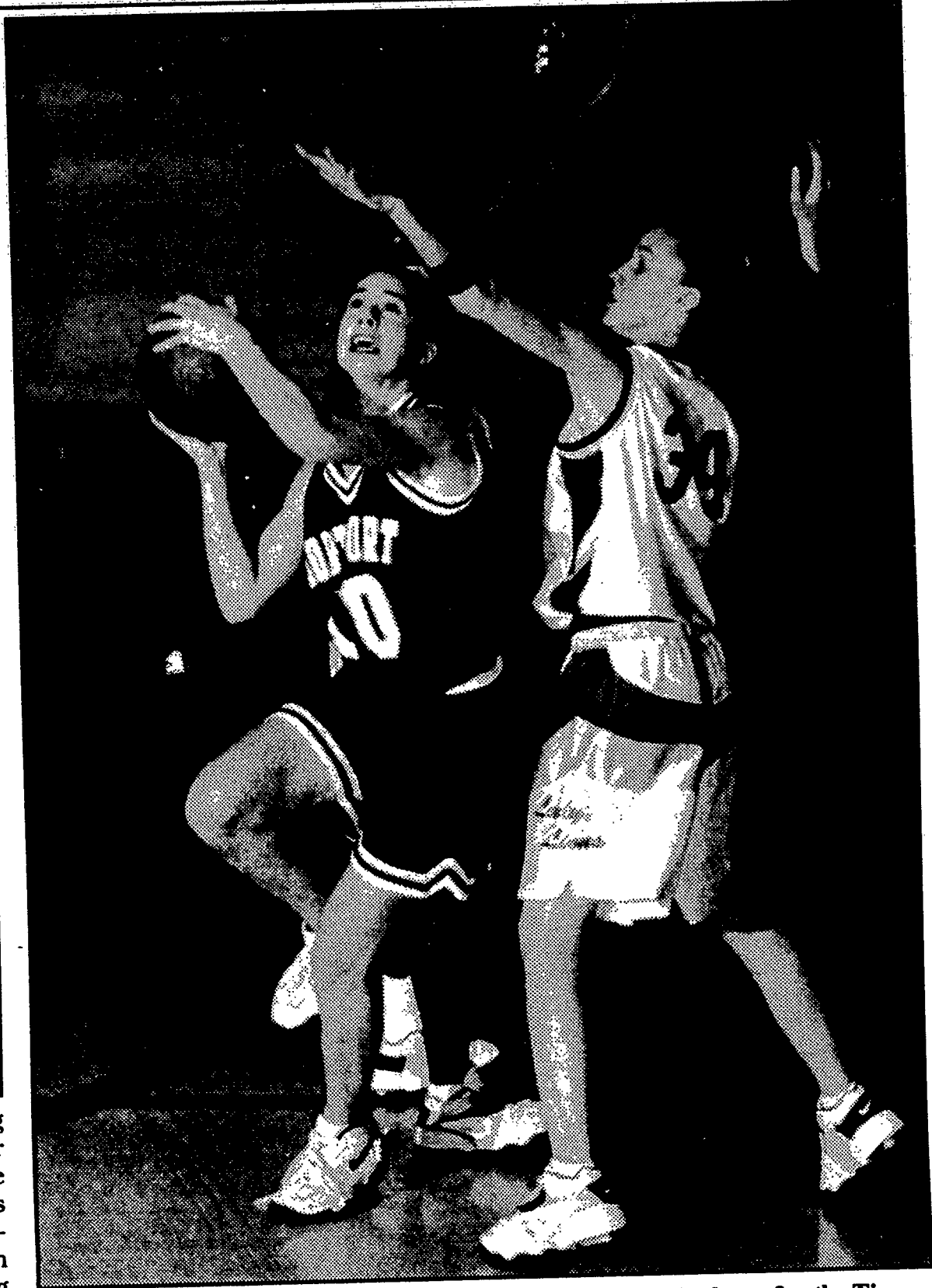
Unfortunately for the Lady Tigers, the momentum from the win began to wear off in the second half of their playoff loss. But the way the season ended will serve as a reminder for those returning to the team next season.

"This season hasn't filled out expectations," Castellano told his underclassmen, tears running down their faces and all. "Disappointment...is going to drive you to not want to lose next year."

With Amen, Katie Angst, Lukas, Watkins, and Jenn Carbajal and others returning next year, Northport should be in good shape. But that's not to say it won't be affected by the loss of seniors like perennial All-Leaguer Beach, Sarah Frost, Meghan McLaughlin and Merry White.

Castellano told the foursome: "You have become the bridge to the next level. You should be the group to carry us to the next level."

We'll have to wait until next season to know for sure.



Lauren Amen (#10, above) and Kerry Beach (below) eye the hoop for the Tigers

