

SPORTS

Third-Quarter Slump Ends

Northport Ousted In Quarterfinals By Eleazer, Longwood

By Tom Allegra

Going into a February 23 quarterfinals match-up with host Longwood, Northport Girls' Basketball coach Rich Castellano knew he needed a solid 32-minute effort from his Lady Tigers.

He got 24.

Like they did in a December 29 non-league loss against Longwood — when they were outscored 16-0 in the third quarter — the Lady Tigers fell flat at the outset of the second half. Longwood senior scoring machine Cheri Eleazer scored nine of her game-high 25 points in the third quarter, as the Lady Lions took a commanding 14-point lead with a 17-5 run.

"The thing that got us was the third quarter — that was the key to the whole game," said Castellano, whose team has not made it to the county finals since winning six straight Suffolk Championships from 1989-1994. "It was the same thing we did the first time

	1	2	FINAL
NORTHPORT	22	19	41
Longwood	24	24	48

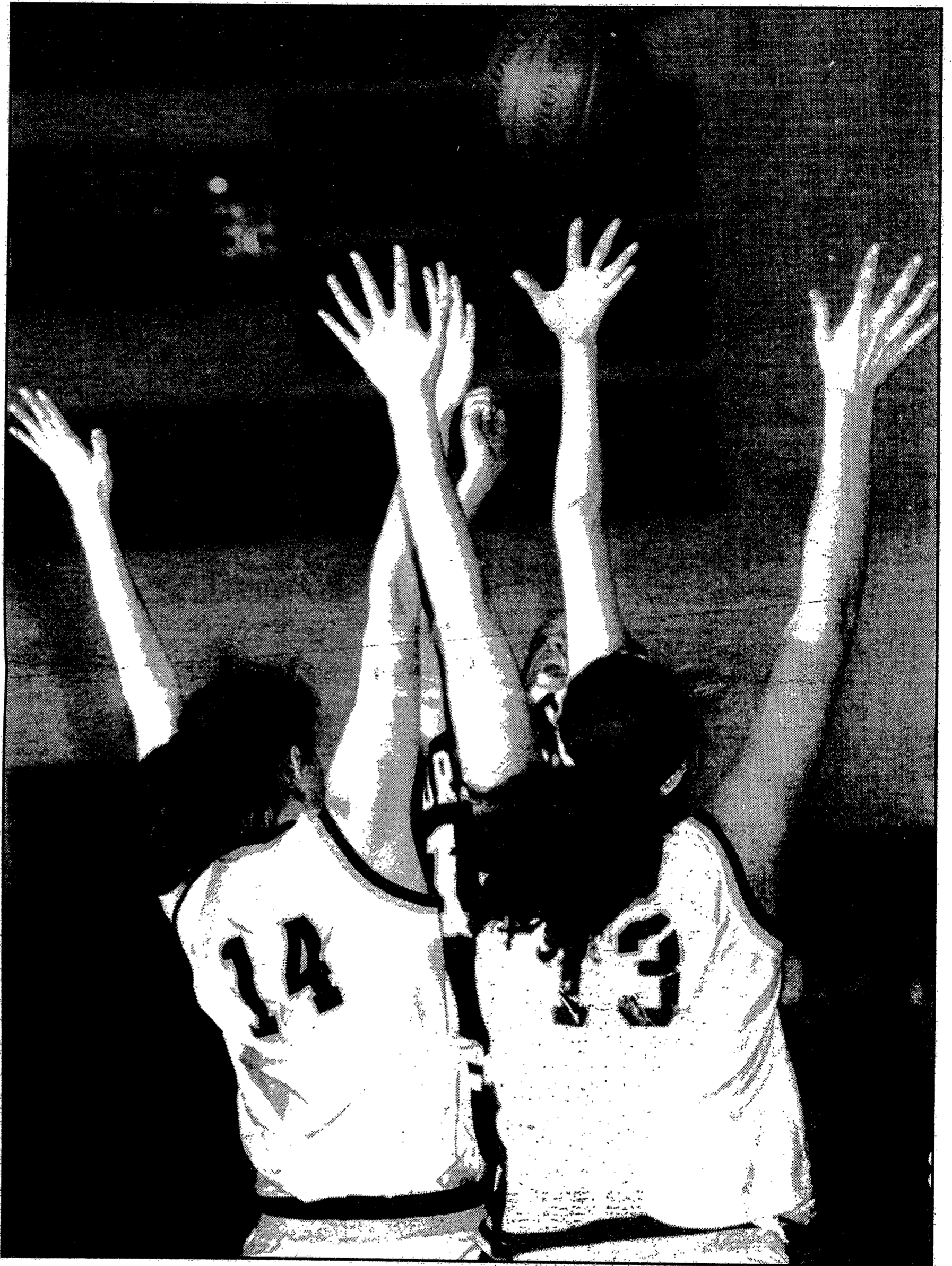
we played them."

"We can't be outscored by them 33-5 in two third quarters and expect to win either of those games."

A pair of missed lay-ups from senior guard BriAnne Watkins and sophomore forward Erika Pepe early on in the third quarter set the tone for what was to come: a 1-for-12 effort from the field. Longwood, in the meantime, took a 28-22 lead with two putbacks. Then, moments after she was driven to the ground with a legal pick from Northport junior forward Liz Ommundsen on the defensive end, Eleazer carried the ball downcourt and completed a three-point play.

Pepe (team-high 13 points) answered with two free-throws and the Lady Tigers' only field-goal of the third period — a drive to the lane during which she drew Eleazer's third foul and pulled Northport within 31-27. But she couldn't convert the ensuing foul shot, and Longwood quickly expanded its lead when Eleazer spotted junior forward Melissa Danchalski for a lay-up. Eleazer took it coast-to-coast for another lay-up, and senior guard Siobhan Kranz' quick deuce gave Longwood a 10-point advantage with 1:17 left in the frame. Danchalski added a 13-foot jumper in the lane, and Eleazer's steal and transition bucket with :07 showing gave Longwood a 41-27 advantage heading into the fourth quarter. Before the Lady Tigers could stop the bleeding, Longwood got another jumper from Danchalski and had taken its biggest lead of the game, 44-29, two minutes into the final stanza.

But Northport wasn't ready to call it a night. Junior reserve guard Kerri Angst sparked an 8-0 run



FRONTED: Northport junior guard Jackie Lukas feels the heat from Longwood forwards Melissa Danchalski (#14) and Danielle DeGiorgio (#13) as she puts up a jumper in the lane during the Lady Tigers' 48-41 quarterfinals loss. Lukas matched sophomore forward Erika Pepe with a team-high 13 points — including seven straight during a 12-0 Northport run — but Danchalski and Longwood senior point guard Cheri Eleazer played much bigger down the stretch.

-Matt Smolinsky photos

with a driving lay-up, while Pepe and junior guard Jackie Lukas followed with two more drives to the hole. Angst capped the surge, draining a elbow jumper to pull Northport within 44-37 at the midway point of the fourth quarter.

Longwood called a time-out to temper the storm, and it worked: sophomore forward Keola Lee immediately converted a Danchalski assist. The Lady

Tigers faltered when Angst missed the front end of a one-and-one with 2:08 showing, and then rest of the team missed three straight jumpers. Eleazer sealed the deal with 43 ticks left when she hit both ends of a one-and-one for a 48-38 lead.

The game's opening five minutes were very similar to the first five minutes of the third quarter, as Longwood broke the Lady Tigers' press en route to a