

Leipsic Nips Conti 73-69 for Third Straight Tournament Title

Leipsic Becomes Third Team in History of PCL to Win Three Crowns in a Row
Putnam County Sentinel – March 2, 1956

Sweeping to a 73-69 victory in the finals, Willis Hartman's Leipsic team captured its third straight tournament championship Saturday night at the Ottawa gymnasium by downing a hard-fighting dark horse Continental five. It was the first time a team has won three straight tournaments since the "Stretch Goedde" days at Vaughnsville in 1940, 1941 and 1942 and only the third time in tournament history the title has stayed that long in one school. Ottonville won three in a row in 1933, 1934 and 1935.

The battling Vikings had to fight right down to the final wire for their victory over the stubborn, Conti five which was not even seeded at the tournament drawings. The outcome of the battle was in doubt until the final seconds of the game when a pair of Leipsic free throws made the spread far enough that the Pirates couldn't catch up.

At the same time, Miller City, the pre-tournament favorite, took the consolation trophy by downing Kalida 76-49 at Leipsic.

Miller City was upset by Continental in a thriller at Leipsic in Friday's semi-final round by a score of 57-55. In the other semi-final tilt, Leipsic earned a hard-fought victory over Kalida on the Ottawa court 65-60.

Conti Rally Falls Short as Leipsic Wins

Continental, which over came a 12-point deficit to defeat Miller City in the semi-finals, almost put on a repeat performance before bowing to Leipsic 69-73 in the championship game.

Leipsic held a 13-point spread at one time in the third quarter before the Pirates put on a

desperation drive which pulled them to within one point in the late stages of the game.

Conti was in command most of the first half but the champions surged ahead in the third period as they fired in 27 points. It was the only period in the game that Leipsic was able to outscore the Prates.

The Vikings won the game from the foul line as they scored three fewer field goals than did the runners-up. Conti outscored them from the floor 28 goals to 25, but Leipsic dumped in 23 of 34 free throws while Conti scored 13 of 22. Continental had 21 personal fouls called against them to Leipsic's 13.

Leipsic broke the ice in the opening minutes of the game and built up an 8-0 lead in the first two minutes and 15 seconds before Conti was able to score a free throw. After that, Conti began to move and with 1:10 showing on the clock, they came within one point 14-13.

A FEW SECONDS later, George Bradford gave Continental its first lead at 15-14 and they stretched it to 17-14 before the period was over. Leipsic shot as the final buzzer sounded and it was good as the quarter ended 17-16 with Continental out in front.

Continental retained the lead the entire second round leading by about five points all the way. As the time ran out, the Pirates were in command 36-30 when Ronnie Settemire let one fly for Leipsic.

The ball went through the hoop as the buzzer sounded and Settemire was fouled in the act of shooting. He made good the free throw and the half ended with Continental ahead 36-33.

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It was the third quarter which eventually spelled victory for Leipsic. Kenny Kuhlman and Settlemire stood out for the Vikings in that round as the Leipsic five took the lead at 6:17 in the period. Kuhlman sank a pair of free throws at that time to give them a 39-38 edge and followed half a minute later with a goal to send them on their way.

In the next three minutes, the Vikings hit the hoops with regularity as they built up a 57-44 advantage. In the final minutes, Conti rallied and by the end of the period they were back in the ball game as they cut the lead to 60-53.

IN THAT BIG third period, Kuhlman hit four out of six shots and added a pair of free throws for 10 of their 27 points. Settlemire sank six straight free throw tries and added a goal for eight more Leipsic points.

The fabulous Ray Johnson paced the Continental come-back in the fourth quarter. After missing eight of 10 shots in the third period, he hit five of seven in the last round for 10 of his 27-point total.

Conti continued to hammer away at the Leipsic lead and with 2:30 left in the game, Johnson hit to make it 64-63 in favor of Leipsic and the packed gym went wild.

Although Continental never took the lead, they were never out of the running until the last second. In the last 2½ minutes, the scoring went as follows: 64/63 – 66/63 – 66/65 – 67/65 – 69/65 – 69/67 – 71/67 – and 71/69 with only seconds left in the game. A pair of Leipsic free throws in the last second iced the victory.

PERSONAL FOUL TROUBLE hurt the Pirates as Bud Moeller, the scrappy Conti guard, left the game via the foul route at the end of the third quarter and Coach Milo Gerken was forced to make his first substitution in the three games. Another member of the team finished with four fouls.

Fouls did not hamper the champion Leipsic squad, although Kuhlman finished with four. None of the others were in trouble.

Leipsic had the better shooting eye, sinking 25 out of 54 shots for a 46.3 per cent average, while Continental which often hit about the 50 per cent mark during the season and hit 70 and 80 per cent in two previous tournament games, sank 28 of 63 shots for a 44.4 per cent average.

Settlemire and Kuhlman put on a beautiful display of foul shooting for the winners. Settlemire made 12 of 14 tries, getting nine straight before missing. Kuhlman sank seven in a row and eight out of nine for the night. The extra shot from the “one-and-one” rule, proved to be the difference in the big game.

Leipsic

Settlemire – 6/12/24. Weaver - 0/1/1. Hazelton - 2/2/6. Kuhlman – 10/8/28. Chamberlain 7/0/14.
Totals – 25/23/73

Continental

Johnson – 11/5/27. J. Moeller – 2/2/6. B. Homier – 7/1/15. B. Moeller – 2/4/8. Bradford – 5/1/11. Wagner – 1/0/2.
Totals – 28/13/69