

# Kortokrax Topples Coaching Mark Saturday at Home

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont – February 4, 1987

It was a long time coming, but Saturday night's victory over Leipsic will be one that Kalida Coach Dick Kortokrax will remember for a long time.

The Wildcats' 68-54 win over Leipsic gave the veteran coach 449 career basketball wins (against 166 losses) in Putnam county, surpassing the mark of his former high school coach Louis W. Heckman. The 449 wins have come over a span of 28 years as Kortokrax has had coaching stints at Fort Jennings (26-28), Ottoville (200-82) and Kalida (223-66).

The win gives Kalida a two-game winning streak (after having lost three straight) and put them over .500 on the season at 7-6 and 2-3 in the Putnam County League. Leipsic drops to 8-5 on the season and has an identical 2-3 PCL mark.

Kortokrax said the win was a fantastic feeling, one made better with the way his team has played lately.

"It was a fantastic feeling, a feeling words can't describe," Kortokrax said. "It was a great experience in beating the record of a man I admired so much and who had held the record for such a long time."

Even with this great win Kortokrax does not rank it up there as the most exciting win he has ever had.

"I'll never forget the state championship win in 1981. That is a goal every coach and player works toward and it will be hard to forget," Kortokrax said. "Breaking this record right now probably doesn't mean as much as it will in the future. But this win definitely will rank right behind the state championship victory."

The milestone win came a little bit easier than expected for the veteran coach as his team turned in a near perfect performance.

The win left little to doubt as the Wildcats started quick, never let up and controlled the Vikings' game plan. This strategy proved to be deadly as the Wildcats jumped out to a 16-8 first quarter lead and never looked back in out dueling the Vikes in every quarter.

In that first quarter, Kalida was able to get the early lead thanks to the shooting of Brian Laudick and Dale Siebeneck. The two guards scored all but two of Kalida's 16 points in the first quarter. It may have been a very key factor in the way Leipsic played the remainder of the contest.

"They (Leipsic) wanted to control our outside game, but the way our guards were hitting they couldn't sit back on one aspect of our game," Kortokrax said. "Once they came out to cover the guards, then we could move it inside."

It was the second straight night the Vikings were taken out of their game plan so early in the contest. In their previous outing against Pandora-Gilboa the Vikes had a simply terrible first few minutes and were never able to fully recover in losing.

On Saturday, the Vikes shot only 31 percent in the first half and never got their running game started. The running game and their dead-eye for the basket have been the key to much of the Viking success this season.

"We just never put together four quarters together," Leipsic coach Scott Walthour said of the weekend losses. "We need to work on our concentration and field goal shooting. It has really been slipping as of late."

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“Hats off to Dick,” Walthour added. “It’s a tribute to a fine coach to be able to go back to the drawing board and come back the way they have. He proved it can be accomplished. Both teams over the weekend wanted to prevent us from running and they did for the most part. It wasn’t only the running game that hurt us, but Kalida’s twin towers prevented us from getting any offensive boards.”

With the Vikings having such an off night from the floor, they were unable to get any second or third shots due to the inside presence of Kalida.

The Wildcats version of the “twin towers” combined for 27 points and 23 rebounds in the win. Brian Vorst led the Wildcats with 18 points and 13 rebounds, while Dave Hovest had nine points and 10 rebounds. Hovest’s production was somewhat limited as he took a spill in the third quarter as he went up for a rebound over the back of a smaller Leipsic player. He sustained a bruised elbow, but will be ready for the team’s next game Friday with Ottoville.

“This was a fine example of a team game,” Kortokrax said. “It started with the way Hovest played on both ends of the court and the outside shooting of Siebeneck and Laudick.”

“Hovest lead the team in assists (with six) and our guards didn’t let them key on our big guys. However, we had to be careful on defense since they can hit the long range shot and play much bigger than they are,” he added.

“We wanted to make Kalida to have to hit from the outside to win,” Walthour said. “They started hitting the outside shot and we had to switch defenses to try and stop them then they went inside.

Not only was Kalida able to out duel Leipsic in the paint they also mixed in a fine selection of outside shots. For the game the Wildcats hit 48 percent of their floor shots, while the Vikes were only able to manage a paltry 39 percent from the floor. Both teams shot 66 percent from the free throw line (Leipsic 10 of 15 and Kalida 14-21).

With Leipsic having trouble hitting from the floor Kalida was able to build up a 30-18 halftime bulge. In the second half Leipsic made a couple of runs at the host, but with each attempt the Wildcats were able to stand their ground and cushion that lead once again.

Siebeneck and Laudick joined Hovest and Vorst in double figures with 12 points. Mike Fenbert paced Leipsic with 11 points, while Brad Peck hit for 10.

Kalida won the reserve contest 47-38 in another close battle for the junior Vikings.

## Leipsic 22 10 54

G. Niese 3-3-9. D. Niese 2-5-9. Schroeder 4-0-8. Fenbert 5-1-11. Peck 5-0-10. Lammers 1-0-2. Hazelton 2-0-4. Kimmet 0-1-1.

## Kalida 27 14 68

Recker 1-7-9. Siebeneck 6-0-12. Laudick 5-2-12. Vorst 8-2-18. Hovest 4-1-9. Kehres 0-2-2. Verhoff 2-0-4. Rambo 1-0-2.

Leipsic 8 10 15 21 54

Kalida 16 14 16 22 68

At the time, it was thought that this was the record setting win #449 – it wasn’t. It was the tying win #448. The actual 449<sup>th</sup> win came a few weeks later when Kalida defeated Ottoville 67-43.