

# No Easy Feat!

## Kortokrax first in Ohio to 800 Wins

The Lima News – Jeremy Schneider – February 21, 2010

Saturday night wasn't the first time Kalida Coach Richard Kortokrax had a team trailing late in the game. And it wasn't the first time Kortokrax delivered some pearls of wisdom.

However, precious few of those talks had the impact and meaning the one delivered at Van Buren did.

The Wildcats rallied from a 13-point deficit late in the third quarter to nip Van Buren 48-47 in boy's basketball Saturday night.

More importantly, in a historic sense at least, the win gives Kortokrax his 800<sup>th</sup> career coaching win, the first coach in Ohio high school basketball history to reach that number.

"Over and over again I've said it – this is a special year," Kortokrax said. "I am absolutely humbled that God has given me the privilege to stick with this thing for 50-odd years. I hope that everyone who has been associated with me understands that this is a part of them."

The Wildcats trailed 29-18 at halftime and 39-26 with 20 seconds to play in the third. There was the customary pep talk, and that the coach delivering the message is the winningest coach in Ohio high school basketball history didn't hurt.

"He told us at halftime that we couldn't get rattled," senior Jordan Basinger said. "He's been through a lot of games that were close, and he told us that we're going to make a run."

Over the last few years, it was Basinger that Kortokrax has turned to in tight games. However, the senior post player was limited with foul trouble; he picked up No. 4 with 6 minutes, 45 seconds left in the game and ended up fouling out at 1:35.

In his stead, junior Kris Osterhage stepped up. He scored 13 of his 15 points in the fourth quarter; including back-to-back one-and-one makes to bring Kalida from a 45-42 deficit to a 48-47 lead.

"Somebody had to step up when Jordan went out," Osterhage said. "(Kortokrax) said to take care of the ball and get good shots, everything else will fall. You've just got to be smart out there."

Basinger finished with 18 points and 11 rebounds. Most impressively, the senior speaking captain made 8-of-9 free

throws as the Wildcats swished 9-of-11 freebies in the fourth quarter.

"We knew eventually we were going to make a run and get it close. It just came down to whether we were going to get it close to win, or get it close to lose," Basinger said.

Kortokrax didn't think it was possible to get to No. 800 this year, saying he just hoped for a winning record. He was even dealt a setback in the pursuit earlier this month, when his official win total was knocked down a win.

Once No. 800 was in the books, though, the cheer went up from the packed gymnasium, notably the raucous Kalida support section. Representatives from the Ohio High School Athletic Association and the Northwest District Athletic Board presented Kortokrax with a plaque afterwards.

"This is something I will remember for the rest of my life," Basinger said. "It's good to have him around and good to play for him."

However, with two regular season games left and the postseason still waiting, Kortokrax put the win in perspective. He has repeatedly said he felt his Division IV state finalist last year was a special group.

He gave the same praise to this year's group after Saturday's win moved them to 16-2.

"This win is a win. A win. It doesn't mean anything to me along the lines of what we've accomplished as a team," Kortokrax said. "Anything that we've accomplished as a team is far more important." Tell that to the history books.

### **Kalida 48**

Mike Bockrath 5. Kristopher Osterhage 15. Jordan Basinger 18. Drew Stechschulte 6. Ben Schroeder 4. Totals 15 16 48

### **Van Buren 47**

Clay Sudlow 8. Andrew Bell 9. Clay Illiff 8. Riley Damon 2. Jude Palmer 8. Rich Meyer 8. Drew Ashcraft 4. Totals 18 9 47.