

# Miller's shot seals title **Kalida State CHAMPS!!**

Putnam County Sentinel – Charlie Warnimont – March 20, 1997

Fort Loramie had done a good job on Kalida's Francine Miller after a hot start. But when the Redskins needed to know where Miller was, they didn't have a clue.

Miller somehow became lost in the shadows Saturday afternoon at St. John's Arena in Columbus and by the time Fort Loramie found her, it was too late.

Miller drained a 20 foot three-pointer with 12 seconds left that propelled Kalida to the Division IV girl's state championship as they defeated Fort Loramie 42-38 before 6,618 people in attendance. The state championship was Kalida's third overall as the school recorded back-to-back championships in 1988 and '89.

The Wildcats, ranked seventh in the final poll, finished the season at 26-1, while the Redskins, third in the final poll, finished the year at 26-2.

The Redskins defense had been conscious of Miller since she opened the game with seven straight points. But when the 5-11 junior became lost in the shuffle Saturday Fort Loramie could only watch their oversight sail towards the basket.

Kalida and Fort Loramie were tied at 38-38 with 17.5 seconds left when Heather Haselman stepped to the foul line for a one and one. Haselman missed the shot, but the long rebound fell into the hands of Deb Schroeder. Schroeder dribbled the ball out, passed to Amy Birkemeier, who swung a quick pass to Miller, who left go with a shot that as heard all the way back to Kalida.

"I thought it was a no doubter," said Miler, who was voted the most Valuable Player in Division IV. "I was wide open and just had to take it.

There was no hesitation. After I saw it go up I was confident it was in, because I had enough arch on it. They all shifted to the left side of the floor and I just kind of hung out on the right side. They got me the ball and I shot right away."

"I wanted to get a shot right away," said Kalida Coach Deb Lammers, when asked about holding for the last shot. "I didn't want to hold the ball. I wanted to put the pressure on them, make them make the pressure shot. I would rather be ahead at any time."

Still the key to the play was Schroeder's rebound. At 5-5 she is one of the smallest players on the court, but when she noticed an opening along the free throw line, (prior to Haselman's free throw) where a Fort Loramie player should have been, she stepped in and the rebound came to her.

"I called her a pest one time," Lammers said. "She averages about three rebounds a game. She just goes in and never lets go. She just seems to come up with big rebounds. The girls will always try to get any kind of advantage. That's why I said she's a pest. She goes where she's not wanted."

The Redskins still had a chance to play for a tie, but Krista Sanders 40 foot shot sailed out of bounds with six seconds left. Fort Loramie then fouled Schroeder and she hit the first of two free throws for the final score.

"That was not the shot we set up, obviously," said Redskin Coach Dave McFeely. "We had plenty of time and we forced a shot. Those things happen when you're dealing with 15, 16 and 17 year old girls. It was a 32 minute game, so I'm not putting the blame on one play."

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Miller's shot ruined a Redskins comeback that saw them grab a three point lead (38-35) with 3:30 left. Julie Mueller gave Fort Loramie the lead with a pair of short baseline jumpers and Mandy Winner added a baseline jumper in the fourth quarter.

However the Redskins problems existed at the charity stripe. Fort Loramie was 2 of 8 at the line in the game and was 0 of 5 at the line in the fourth quarter.

"Our free throw shooting was bad all year," McFeely said. "You are not going to be able to compete in games of this caliber if you don't do that."

The missed free throws were important as Fort Loramie's defense forced Kalida to take a couple of ill-advised three-pointers as they tried to get it back all at once.

"We rushed a couple of shots," Lammers said. "I told the girls in the timeout to settle down. We don't want the girls to not shoot if they are open."

The Wildcats several times appeared to be ready to run away from Fort Loramie, but each time the Redskins made their comeback.

Kalida scored the first five points of the game and led 13-10 after one quarter. The Wildcats scored the first five points of the second quarter to grab an eight point lead, but Fort Loramie came back to trail 20-18 at the half.

In the third quarter Kalida pushed the lead back to eight points at 28-20, but the Redskins pulled within 33-32 going into the fourth quarter.

One reason for the Redskins being able to hang around was their inside game. Mueller led the way with 18 points and eight rebounds, while Winner had 10 points and eight rebounds.

"They were a pretty physical team," said Kalida sophomore Heather Haselman. "They had a lot of strength underneath. They did a good job of posting up and checking out. We just tried our hardest to play good defense."

Lammers felt her guard play was the key to the defense. "We have played good defense all year," Lammers said. "The guards did a beautiful job not letting them drive and dish to Mandy (Winner) or Julie (Mueller). They made them work and reverse the ball. The guards sopped the penetration."

Miller led the Wildcats with 17 points, four rebounds, two assists and six steals. Haselman chipped in with 13 points and a team high seven rebounds, two steals and an assist. Amy Birkemeier had four assists and three steals.

## **Fort Loramie 15-35 2-6 2-8 38**

Eilerman 1-0-0-2; Mueller 9-0-0-18; Winner 4-0-2-10; Steinke 0-0-0-0; Maurer 1-0-0-2; Turner 0-1-0-3; Sanders 0-1-0-3.

## **Kalida 16-33 1-5 7-12 42**

A. Unverferth 2-0-0-4; Miller 5-1-4-17; K. Unverferth 0-0-1-1; Schroeder 1-0-1-3; Birkemeier 1-0-0-2; Haselman 6-0-1-13; Czubik 1-0-0-2.

Rebounds: Fort Loramie 24 (Mueller 8, Winner 8); Kalida 24 (Haselman 7).

Turnovers: Fort Loramie 21 and Kalida 21.