

Wildcat Girls Surprised In Season's First Contest

A season of promise got off on the wrong foot Monday night, Dec. 3, in the first round of the Circle Thunderbirds Girls Classic at Towanda.

Highly-touted Mulvane High School can kiss the tournament title good-bye after Independence taught the Cats a lesson with a 60-50 triumph in the tourney's first game.

Throwing a two-player blanket over Mulvane all-state candidate Kendra Banzet, Indy pulled away in the second quarter as the rest of the Wildcats went cold and won handily. Independence held a 15-point lead before Mulvane cut it to five late in the game. Good free throwing down the stretch enabled Independence to hold off Mulvane.

The loss threw Coach Gregg Wolgast's team into the loser's bracket where Mulvane will meet Andover at 6:15 p.m. tonight (Dec. 6) in gym No. 2. Mulvane will play again at 4:15 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8, in the final round.

"We're pretty disappointed, yes, but there are some specific things we can work on, like going to the boards and working harder to get the ball down the floor quicker, which will free people up inside."

Wolgast said Independence did a great job doing what everybody's going to be doing against the Wildcat girls this season...sagging back in the paint to stop the 6-foot, 3-inch Banzet. Last year's top scorer and rebounder was handled by Indy, though, and Mulvane's outside shooters failed to pick up the slack.

"Early on, we shot the ball well from the outside but in the second quarter, the girls started trying to force it in and became hesitant to take their own shots," said Wolgast. "That's when Independence started taking control of the game. They really played well and did a good job getting back defensively. They got back quickly and set up, which kept us from getting the ball inside to Kendra. We talked to the girls and told them that's what Independence would do. In fact, that's what everybody's going to do. They're going to make the other players score."

The strategy isn't new but Independence put together a good game plan with a 2-1-2 zone. Two players sagged back on Banzet and effectively took her out of the game. "They shut her down," admitted Wolgast. "She didn't have any points in the first half because they had two 6-footers on her all the time and concentrating on seeing that Kendra didn't touch the ball."

In the first quarter, the Wildcats rolled like expected, out-scoring Independence, 12-8, but Indy turned up the heat in the second

quarter and by halftime held a 30-20 lead.

In the first quarter, the Cats got a couple buckets from senior Ticia Nicholson and some outside shooting from Lisa Heersche and Kerri Taylor. "We were doing a good job of other people picking up the slack until that time but the girls started trying to force things and didn't take their shots," said Wolgast.

Actually, the Wildcats as a team shot well—47% for the night, but Independence shot better—49%.

"We also were very timid going to the boards," said Wolgast, "especially the offensive boards. Finally, in the 4th quarter we started going to the board more aggressively and were hitting them a little harder, which allowed us to cut the gap to five. If we would have gone to the boards the whole game like we did in the last quarter, we would have had a better shot at winning the ball game."

Nicholson finished the game with 13 points and 10 boards as well as six assists, all were team-high figures. Heersche was the only other player in double figures, hitting 10 points. Banzet and guard Tricia Turner scored eight points apiece and for Banzet, it was the first time in quite a few games that she didn't hit double figures.

Guard Kerri Taylor scored six points and reserve Robin Smith finished with four points.

"Another area where I was disappointed was in our free throwing," added Wolgast. "We shot eight of 19 and some of those were 1-and-1's, so there was the ball game

Circle Thunderbird Girls Classic Results

First Round

Independence	8	22	15	15--60
Mulvane	12	8	12	18--50

Independence—Julie Cunningham 18, Anne Wehmeyer 8, Susanne Bell 13, Amber Sanborn 12, Shannon Blocher 4, Brandi Hawkins 1, Beth Smith 4. FG 23-47 (0), FT 8-18, F 16.

Mulvane—Ticia Nicholson 13, Kendra Banzet 8, Lisa Heersche 10, Tricia Turner 8, Jennifer McCain 1, Kerri Taylor 6, Robin Smith 4. FG 21-45 (0), FT 8-20, F 20.

Augusta 78, Andover 56
Circle 58, Arkansas City 44
Rose Hill 66, El Dorado 49

Circle Thunderbird Girls Classic Pairings Tonight (Dec. 6)

SEMIFINALS

Game 5	Mulvane vs. Andover, gym No. 2, 6:15 p.m.
Game 6	Arkansas City vs. El Dorado, gym No. 1, 6:15
Game 7	Independence vs. Augusta, gym No. 2, 8
Game 8	Rose Hill vs. Circle, gym No. 1, 8

Saturday, Dec. 8

Game 9 (Seventh Place) - losers of games 5 and 6, gym No. 2, 4:15 p.m.

Game 10 (Fifth Place) - winners of games 5 and 6, gym No. 1, 4:15

Game 11 (Third Place) - losers of games 7 and 8, gym No. 1, 6:15

Game 12 (Championship) - winners of games 7 and 8, gym No. 1, 8

right there. We've got to have better shooting at the line."

The Wildcat girls will get into the Chisholm Trail League play Tuesday, Dec. 11, when they go to Goddard for a loop game before returning to Mulvane the following Tuesday (Dec. 18) for their home opener against Valley Center.