

Aquinas cruises to Class BB title

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Aquinas guard Amy Reynders said she received the best birthday present she could ask for this year: a championship title for the Little Irish to go along with the Most Valuable Player award for the Section 5 Class BB tournament.

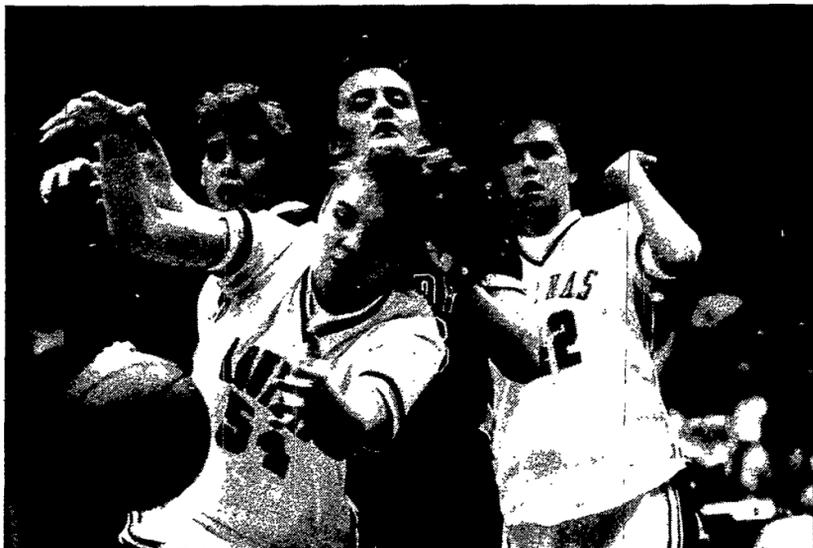
Reynders turned 17-years-old on Feb. 28 — the same day the No. 4 Little Irish ousted sixth-seeded Churchville-Chili, 47-36, in the Class BB finals at the War Memorial.

Reynders, who was hampered by a shoulder injury that has persisted

the basket when it was determined that the automatic buzzer had malfunctioned.

Team spark plug Mary Radford encouraged her teammates to keep their spirits up during the third quarter, especially a discouraged Reynders who missed several shots from the charity stripe.

By the fourth quarter, however, the Little Irish needed no consoling as they burst to a 10-point lead with 14 seconds to play in the game. Jill Banaszewski nailed the front end of a one-and-one with 12 seconds left, and another foul shot with 10 seconds remaining to push Aquinas to a 13-point lead, 47-34.



Sandy Petty of Aquinas leads the rush for a loose ball during the Little Irish's 47-36 win over Churchville-Chili at the Rochester Community War Memorial Feb. 28.

throughout the season, played the whole game despite the pain. The Aquinas junior notched 13 points and 15 rebounds.

"It doesn't matter how much pain she's in, she wants to keep playing," explained AQ Coach Dan Bates.

With the help of Reynders' four points, the Little Irish roared to a 12-2 lead at the end of the first quarter. Kristina Dudley paced the Little Irish in the second quarter with eight points.

A basket at the buzzer by Chili's Shannon Larson appeared to trim AQ's lead to 23-20, but officials after nullified

Chili's Janice Frost nailed a basket in the last seconds, but it was too little too late.

"This is the big one, this is the one that counts," Reynders said moments after the win.

Banaszewski said she was worried about AQ's chances at halftime, but felt better about things by the end of the third quarter.

Radford added that she was confident of her team's ability to come on strong in the second half. "We were ready for this," she said.

Dudley paced the Little Irish with a game-high 16 points and was named to the



Jill Banaszewski and Amy Reynders enjoy the final moments of AQ's win in the sectional title game.

All-Tournament Team.

The Little Irish had to defeat Wellsville in a Class B sectional qualifier this week at Geneseo State College in order to advance to state regional competition.

Aquinas advanced to the finals by nipping No. 1 Pittsford Mendon, 51-50, in a heart-stopping semifinal game on Feb. 26, at Roberts Wesleyan College.

After AQ grabbed a slight lead at the end of the first quarter (11-10), the excitement heated up as Reynders hit nothing but net on a desperation shot from half-court at the buzzer. The second quarter ended all tied up at 24-24.

The Little Irish trailed by two points in the final quarter, 47-45, but Banaszewski's three-point basket gave AQ a narrow lead with five minutes left. The game was deadlocked, 53-53, with 1:13 remaining in the match.

Reynders hurt her shoulder with 1:09 left and was taken out of the game, apparently in extreme pain. After Reynders sat down, Sandy Petty converted two shots at the foul line, but a Mendon basket tied the game, 55-55, with nine seconds to play. Reynders then reentered the fray.

Banaszewski was then fouled on a three-point attempt and stepped up to the line for AQ. Although she sank only one of her three attempts, it was enough to give Aquinas the one-point victory.

Banaszewski said she couldn't believe she missed two of her final foul shots.

"I felt a lot of pressure in the game. I usually make all of my foul shots, but I missed two of the three because of all the pressure," explained the senior guard.

Radford said she couldn't believe how close the game was in the end.

"It was a point, just a basket, only one, that's all," remarked a stunned Radford directly after the game.

Despite her injury, Reynders insisted on going back in the game in the final minutes.

"I had to go back in because we're going all the way," said Reynders, who led the AQ squad with 25 points.

In Section 5 Class A, sixth-seeded



Amy Reynders of Aquinas shoots over Pittsford Mendon's Kim Jamison during the Little Irish's 51-50 win in the Section 5 Class BB semifinals at Roberts Wesleyan College Feb. 26.

Brockport (12-10) got the best of No. 2 Our Lady of Mercy (17-4) for the second consecutive year, as the Blue Devils defeated the Monarchs, 51-50, in the semifinals on Feb. 26 at Edison Tech.

Brockport eliminated Mercy in last year's Class A final game, 78-71.

The Blue Devils jumped to an early lead this time around by grabbing a 10-6 lead after one quarter. But by halftime Mercy took control with a 22-21 margin.

Brockport's Jill Finkbeiner sparked the Blue Devils' third quarter with eight points, propelling her team to a 37-33 lead entering the final eight minutes.

Mercy had a chance to win the game with three seconds left, but Mary Beth Cleary's shot fell off the far rim.

Sheila Doyle iced 17 points and four steals and Mimi LaMagna notched 11 points for Mercy.

Although the Monarchs failed to advance to the finals, Coach Kathy Boughton said her team had nothing to be ashamed of this season.

"I have great pride in the kids for being willing to accept big challenges. We kept our expectations high and that's what kept us going," noted Boughton, who guided her team to a season of 17-4 overall and 6-0 in the Private-Parochial League.

Top-seeded Fairport crushed Brockport, 51-34, in the Class A finals at the War Memorial on March 1.

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