

Albertus Magnus quashes AQ's hopes for state title

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

GLENS FALLS — March 17 should have been a lucky day for Aquinas. After all, AQ's teams are known as the Little Irish.

But when the Little Irish played Albertus Magnus of Rockland County in the finals of the New York State High School Girls' Class B Basketball Championship on St. Patrick's Day, their luck ran out.

Albertus Magnus (Section 1) mauled AQ, 71-39, at Queensbury High School in Glens Falls.

The Lady Falcons jumped out to an early lead and maintained their advantage throughout. Aquinas trailed, 21-13, at the end of the first quarter.

The Little Irish appeared a bit flustered after Albertus Magnus ballooned its lead to 34-20 by intermission. The Lady Falcons built their lead with a battery of shots from long- and close-range. Albertus Magnus players were able to maneuver through AQ's normally tight defense at will, passing the ball effectively and hitting layups with their off-hand.

The Lady Falcons continued to dominate at the beginning of the third quarter as they put together a 16-point scoring spurt. Despite the attempts of AQ spark-plug Mary Radford to bolster the spirits of her teammates, Albertus Magnus soared to a 34-point lead, 60-26, with six minutes to play in the final stanza. The Lady Falcons cruised from there.

Although the Little Irish lost the state final, some luck did come their way in the form of new tournament records. Jill Banaszewski's three-point shot with 5:59 remaining in the game gave Aquinas the team record for treys (10) in the state tournament.

Aquinas broke the old record of nine set by Nottingham High School of Syracuse (Syracuse) in the 1989 state tournament.

Aquinas also tied Nottingham's record for the most three-point field goals in one tournament game. Both schools tallied nine.

Despite the loss to Albertus Magnus, several players stood out for AQ. Amy Reynders notched a team-high 12 points and Banaszewski tallied 11 points — in-

cluding three treys. Both players were named to the All-Tournament Team.

Jennifer Feeney of Albertus Magnus poured in a game-high 20 points while Kim Behrens added 17 points. Both girls were named to the All-Tournament Team. Feeney was named Most Valuable Player.

Aquinas Coach Dan Bates said shooting woes cost the AQ girls a shot at the state title.

"The ball went their way a couple inches or more," noted Bates. "Sometimes you live by outside shooting; tonight we died by it."

Although the Little Irish left Queensbury High School state runners-up in Class B, Bates said his team should be proud of its accomplishments this season.

"Our girls can shout as loud as they want. We came (to the state tournament) with one of the worst records and now we



Aquinas' Mary Radford plays keep away from Jennifer Feeney of Albertus Magnus while Amy Reynders (right) moves in to assist.



Mary Radford (center) consoles teammates Jill Banaszewski (left) and Amy Reynders after the Little Irish lost to Albertus Magnus, 71-39, in the finals of the New York State High School Girls' Class B Basketball Championship.



Aquinas' Jill Banaszewski collides with Margaret Ferrick of Albertus Magnus as the ball goes out of bounds during AQ's March 17 loss at Queensbury High School in Glens Falls.

are number two in the state," Bates said.

One of Aquinas' post-season accomplishments came during its trouncing of previously undefeated Amityville (Long Island), 59-46, in the Class B semifinal game at Queensbury High on March 16.

Banaszewski, Reynders and Kristina Dudley combined for AQ's first six points before Amityville's Theresa Findlay sank two free throws.

Reynders then propelled Aquinas to a 24-10 lead by the end of the first quarter, notching 15 of her game-high 32 points in the opening stanza.

Despite attempts by Jacqueline Guidroz and Findlay to keep Amityville in the game, the Lady Warriors headed into the locker room staring at a 36-21 deficit.

Reynders finished the half with 20 points while Banaszewski iced 13 of her 16 points in the first half.

After a 9-0 run, Amityville trimmed AQ's lead to 37-32 halfway through the third quarter. Reynders recalled that the scoring run created some doubts as to whether the Little Irish could hang on.

"But we did and that's all that matters," the junior guard said.

The Little Irish regained their composure and ballooned their lead to 10 points three times in the second half — with 1:16 left in the third (46-36), 2:07 remaining in the game (52-42) and 1:41 left in the fourth (54-44).

Bates credited the win to jumping on the previously top-ranked Lady Warriors early.



Amy Reynders accepts "high fives" from teammates before AQ's win over Amityville in the Class B state semis at Queensbury High March 16.

"We stuck it to them early and shocked them," remarked Bates. "They had a good comeback but they couldn't overcome."

Reynders said that many people did not expect Aquinas to advance to the state tournament.

"After the teams we beat in sectionals, no one expected us to do any damage," Reynders said. "We don't have the pressure when we come out (like the top teams), and we don't come out with big heads."

Courier photos by Babette