



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Bishop Kearney team members celebrate the final seconds of the Kings' 68-63 Section 5 state-qualifier win over Pittsford Sutherland at the Rochester Community War Memorial March 8.

Road to state crown gets shorter

Kearney knocks off Sutherland, Olean

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — For two straight games last week, the ear-splitting screams in the Community War Memorial carried on almost non-stop.

But as far as Vernon Banks was concerned, only one voice mattered.

Regardless of how loud the crowd roared, Bishop Kearney Coach Ed Nietopski's emphatic cries of "Rebound! Rebound!" were unmistakable.

"He's the only person I hear. I don't hear anyone else except Coach," Banks acknowledged.

And was Banks ever paying attention last Saturday, March 11. The Kings' senior forward grabbed 15 rebounds to go along with his 17 points as BK stormed past Olean of Section 6 (Buffalo area), 78-62, in the Class B Far West Regional final.

The state quarterfinal victory followed an emotional 68-63 win over Pittsford Sutherland in a Section 5 state qualifier on March 8 at the War Memorial.

Next stop: the Glens Falls Civic Center.

One year after the school's first-ever sectional title win, the Kings have soared even higher in 1995 — and there may be more to come.

Kearney, with a record of 22-3, will take on Poughkeepsie of Section 1 (New York City area) at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 18, in a state semifinal game. The winner will play either Amsterdam of Section 2 (Albany area) or Riverhead of Section 11 (Suffolk County, Long Island) for the state title on March 19 at 1 p.m.

BK struggled early against Olean and its shot-swatting center Charles Perry, trailing 20-16 after one quarter.

Yet an unexpected Kearney contribution came from backup guard Scott Harrison, who entered the game late in the first half for the foul-plagued Kevin Goode. Harrison, whose previous-high point total in any prior game this year had been six points, quickly equaled that figure by canning two three-point baskets to help break a 29-29 tie and give



BK's Kevin Goode, who had 27 points and six steals, attempts to steal the ball from Sutherland's Greg Norris.

the Kings a 37-32 edge at the half.

"For a sophomore, it's incredible," exulted Harrison, who also went 6-for-7 from the foul line in the fourth quarter to finish with 12 points.

Banks wore Perry down after halftime, starting with a five-point run of his own to begin the third quarter and give BK a 42-32 lead. The Kings coasted home from there, leading by as many as 18.

Adam Randall led all scorers with 23

points. BK's senior forward also contributed 10 rebounds.

The Olean game came on the heels of Kearney's five-point win over Sutherland, a team the Kings had not met since upsetting the Knights in overtime in the 1994 Section 5 Class B finals.

Goode and his brother Patrick starred last Wednesday by scoring 27 and 15 points, respectively, and also making six steals each. Ryan Blackwell, the Knights' University of Illinois-bound center, compiled 29 points and 22 rebounds.

Banks said that the pressure-packed atmosphere surrounding the Sutherland triumph helped prepare BK for Olean.

"It (Sutherland) showed it was possible to do anything we wanted if we put our minds to it," Banks commented. "Today (March 11) we just enjoyed it."

"The pressure was off. The kids relaxed," agreed Nietopski.

Relaxed? Perhaps.

Complacent? Not on your life.

"We're out there to win the state championship," Nietopski asserted.

Then he paused momentarily, the intensity of BK's achievements hitting him full force.

"Two more games and we're state champions," Nietopski murmured. "Can you believe it?"

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