

'Youth hurts' in Lady Vikings loss

Published 2/18/08 in *The Times-Herald*

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FAYETTEVILLE — The Northgate Lady Vikings were in a hole early and were unable to recover Saturday afternoon as they were defeated 57-42 in the third place game of the Region 2-AAAA Tournament at Fayette County High School.

Despite the loss, the Lady Vikings (14-12) will make their state playoff debut next Saturday when they travel to Warner Robins to face Northside who defeated Baldwin 64-42 to the Region 4-AAAA Tournament Saturday evening.

"It was one of those games where our youth hurt us," commented Northgate head coach Matt Trucks. "The girls had a tough game last night but we had 17 turnovers and not many offensive rebounds."

After a basket by Natalie Pluskota tied the game at 2-2, the War Eagles scored six unanswered points to take an 8-2 lead with three minutes remaining in the first period.

Woodward had another streak in the first period after a Northgate basket and a 7-0 run became a 15-4 lead at the end of the period.

The Lady Vikings rallied in the second period as they went on a 7-2 run that cut the deficit to 17-11 with 4:20 remaining and trailed 21-18 at the half courtesy of a 7-4 run later in the period.

Woodward opened the third period with a pair of quick baskets as part of a 13-6 run that led to a 34-24 lead with 3:30 remaining in the stanza.

Behind the hot hand of **Brianna Banks** who scored 12 points in the period, Northgate was able to cut the margin to single digits as they trailed 38-30 going into the final period.

In the middle of the fourth period, the Lady Vikings still trailed by single digits at 45-38 but turnovers would plague any attempts of a rally as the War Eagles finished the game with a 12-6 run.

"I wasn't happy with our performance today but I am still very proud of these girls," Trucks said. "They have worked hard all season and will be going to the state playoffs for the first time."

The 12-point third period from Banks would lead all scorers in the game with 25 points despite leaving the game after an elbow to the face and landing on a knee later in the game.

"Brianna stepped it up today," Trucks said. "She has been banged up lately but she played well today."

Natalie Pluskota had her second lowest scoring output of the season when she was held to four points but this was not a concern to her coach for basketball and tennis..

"Natalie has been a trooper all season and played like that today," Trucks commented about his senior athlete. "She hurt her thumb this week and has been banged up most of the season. Natalie has played hard all season and won't come out of games."

Having to concentrate on Woodward post player Chase Morgan, Alyse Lewis had only three rebounds and two blocks but the defensive force for Northgate scored seven points of her own and held Morgan to six points.