

Home Court Advantage

Former player's advice surprises team

A 99-year-old woman stood before the girls' basketball team in an empty gym. Her name was Mary Warner, and as a previous player and a mentor, she mustered all her life experience to guide the team on the night before their second game at the state competition. She was the last surviving member of the 1934 team, which was the last Johnston team to win a game at state, and she had one idea to share: "It's only basketball."

The team was relieved to hear her words of wisdom. They had worked their way to the top, but were reminded of the importance of their experience along the way. "She just kept telling us, it's just basketball," senior Haylee Towers said. "You have so many more years ahead of you, and just play your heart

out and make the most of the time you have with these people."

The players were motivated by Warner's recollection of her game. "How she still remembers it to this day, how that experience of state stayed with her throughout her life, I think it just kinda touched us all," senior Shayna Stubbs said. "Like, we're going to have this moment for the rest of our lives. So whether we win or lose-- just being there, and having that experience, playing in front of such a big crowd, and being known as one of the best teams in state, I think, is just awesome."

The girls won the game against S. E. Polk in the quarterfinals, defeated Linn-Mar in the semifinals, then lost to Ankeny Centennial 42-46 in the finals. "Our first game, I feel like we

were just trying to get a feel for the environment, our second game we came out really strong, and stayed strong the whole game," Stubbs said. "Our last game we didn't play like we usually do, and I think the pressure got to us a little bit."

In their last games, the girls strove to do Warner justice in both their scores and their attitudes. "It was always in the back of our heads, like, we wanted to win for her since she came in," sophomore Jenna Johnson said. "(but) there wasn't as much pressure, because we just wanted to do our best, and it was all about the experience."

"That added something to keep in mind," Towers said. "Playing for something outside ourselves is fun."

Captions by: Kati Anderson
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1. Senior Julia Beswick accepts the second-place trophy at the state championship on March 5. "It was a realization that my career in basketball was over," Beswick said. "It was just an emotional moment." (Photo by Ashley Long)

2. Junior Brooke Wilmes attempts to play solid defense against Indianola with sophomore Gwynna Miner and freshman Marley Muelhapt. "I was really calm and relaxed at that time, but on the inside I was pumped and excited," Wilmes said. "This game was really awesome because the JV team was so excited to beat such a good team. We were excited the rest of the night." (Photo by Kati Anderson)



3. During the second game of the state tournament, junior Taryn Knuth attempts to score. "There was a lot of adrenaline and nerves," Knuth said. "The moment was definitely big, but I just tried to play within myself like it was just any other game." (Photo by Kati Anderson)



4. Senior Rachel Hinders attempts to make a post move and score at the state championship at Wells Fargo. "This game was the coolest experience of my life," Hinders said. "Playing on that floor was such an adrenaline rush." The Dragons lost to the Jaguars with a close score of 42-46. (Photo by Ashley Long)

5. At the basketball jamboree against Roosevelt, junior Madelyn Hurn dribbles the ball down the court. "I was just hoping to help my team score," Hurn said. (Photo by Kati Anderson)

6. During the first round state game against Indianola, senior Haylee Towers dribbles on a fast break as she attempts to get a transition basket. The Dragons took home another win against the Indians, 71-52. (Photo by Kati Anderson)

7. At the start of the Valley game, senior Shayna Stubbs runs out as the announcer calls her name. "I was really nervous because it was our first game against Valley and we hadn't beat them in three years," Stubbs said. They won by 20 points by working well together as a team. (Photo by Kati Anderson)

8. Junior Elle Brown shoots the ball after doing a spin dribble to get herself open during the state final against Ankeny Centennial. "I was feeling nervous because of the situation we were in but also confident in my team because I knew we were going to fight throughout the rest of the game," Brown said. (Photo by Ashley Long)

9. Seniors Rachel Hinders and Haylee Towers hug after their loss to Ankeny Centennial at the state championship at Wells Fargo Arena. "It's every athlete's dream to play at Wells," Hinders said. "It was the best week of my life and getting to end my high school career at Wells Fargo was the best way to end it." (Photo by Ashley Long)

NUMBERS DON'T LIE

HAYLEE TOWERS #20	43 Three Pointers	SHAYNA STUBBS #22	70 Assists	RACHEL HINDERS #42	399 Total Points
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