

Hill reaches 1,000 as Mansfield clinches title share

By Mark Farinella



Mansfield's Megan Hill is greeted by her teammates after scoring her 1000th point.
Martin Gavin / The Sun Chronicle

FRANKLIN — History was made on a number of fronts Friday night at Franklin High School. Mansfield High's 6-foot-3 center, Meg Hill, became the second female basketball player from her school to score 1,000 career points on a layup with 1:02 left in the first quarter of the game against the Panthers. And as a result of her team's 62-48 victory, Mansfield clinched a share of its third straight championship of the Hockomock League's Kelley-Rex Division.

The latter may have been more thrilling to the Stonehill College-bound senior than the personal milestone.

"That's so cool," she said. "That's what I really wanted — three league titles, that's really cool."

"She got it done early and that was good," Mansfield coach Mike Redding said of the milestone basket, which came in the midst of a 20-9 Hornet first quarter. "After that, they started to come back and had a great second quarter. But I thought we really came out in the third quarter, and re-established ourselves with a good inside-outside game."

Indeed, the game would have lived up to the advance billing as a meeting of the two best teams in the division without the added drama of Hill's milestone quest.

It started with a touching moment. By mutual consent, Hill was allowed an uncontested basket after the opening tap and the Hornets responded by allowing the same to Franklin senior Kate Morse, who had missed the season following an ACL injury in the fall.

Following that, the level of play quickly reached championship caliber. Hill hit two 12-foot jumpers — and had one try in the paint swatted away by Franklin's 6-4 center, Ali Brigham — before she was able to get the milestone out of the way.

On a fast break in transition, Hill took a bullet pass from Mady Bendanillo and scored on the lay-in to join 1993 graduate Sue Patchett as the only other girl on Mansfield's six-player list of 1,000-point scorers.

Although she looked cool and collected, Hill said that wasn't the case.

“I was so nervous,” she said. “I wanted to win the game more than anything, but I was so glad I got it over with.”

Fortunately for Hill, who came in needing just seven points, she did not have to wait for the last three seconds of her game as Patchett did, scoring the last two points at the foul line in a 51-35 win at home against Canton on Jan. 22, 1993.

Hill’s basket came in the midst of a 8-0 Hornets run to finish the opening quarter. But Franklin (11-7) opened the second quarter with three baskets — two by Brigham and one assisted by her — and the Panthers trailed by just two on Megan O’Connell’s lay-in off Brigham’s feed with 2:36 left in the half.

Leading 29-26 entering the second half, Mansfield’s strong outside shooting turned the tide in the opening minutes. Ann Maher and Sydney Mulkern hit 3-pointers and Mulkern and Hill added outside jumpers for a 10-0 run in the first 3 1/2 minutes.

The lead swelled to 48-35 on Erin Daniel’s trey (one of nine by the Hornets) with 15 seconds left in the third quarter. Franklin cut the deficit to eight points twice in the final quarter, but a Maher three with 3:12 left stopped one run, and Mansfield finished a perfect 6-for-6 at the foul line in the last 43.2 seconds.

Brigham had 16 points and 12 rebounds and Breanna Atwood and Bea Bondhus 10 points apiece for the Panthers. Maher had 15 points and Bendanillo a game-high six assists for the Hornets.

Hill finished with 17 points (for 1,010 in 93 career games) and 10 rebounds, and wanted to share her happiness with teammates past and present.

“We’ve worked really hard as a team and we’ve got really great chemistry as a team,” she said. “These girls are my best friends, and it’s easy.”

Mansfield (15-4, 13-1) visits King Philip Tuesday.

MANSFIELD (62)

Daniel 1-4 2-2 5, Vigeant 1-4 0-0 2, Mulkern 3-7 2-2 9, M. Bendanillo 2-7 2-4 8, Kemp 1-3 0-0 2, Maher 5-11 0-0 15, K. Bendanillo 0-0 0-0 0, Hill 8-16 1-2 17, Danehy 1-3 2-4 4, totals 22-55 9-14 62.

FRANKLIN (48)

Atwood 4-5 0-0 10, Gray 0-1 1-2 1, Sanders 0-1 1-2 1, MacCallum 1-1 0-0 2, Bondhus 3-9 3-4 10, Garilli 0-2 0-0 0, Sameski 0-1 0-0 0, Brigham 7-16 2-7 16, Morse 1-1 0-0 2, Collins 0-1 0-0 0, O’Connell 3-6 0-0 6, Frongillo 0-0 0-0, 19-44 7-15 48.

Team	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Final
Mansfield	20	09	19	14	62
Franklin	09	17	09	13	48

3-point goals—Mansfield 9-19 (Daniel 1-1, Vigeant 0-2, Mulkern 1-3, M. Bendanillo 2-3, Maher 5-10), Franklin 3-13 (Atwood 2-3, Gray 0-1, Bondhus 1-4, Garilli 0-2, Sameski 0-1, Brigham 0-1, Collins 0-1).

Rebounds--Mansfield 32 (Hill 10), Franklin 30 (Brigham 12).

Assists--Mansfield 18 (M. Bendanillo 6), Franklin 13 (O’Connell 4).

Total fouls--Mansfield 7, Franklin 15. Fouled out--Gray.

JV: Franklin, 48-45.

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Hill Hits Milestone, Hornets Clinch Title at Franklin



Senior center Meg Hill celebrates with her teammates after scoring her 1,000th career point in the Hornets' win at Franklin that clinched at least a share of a third straight league title. (Josh Perry/HockomockSports.com)



By Josh Perry
Managing Editor

FRANKLIN, Mass. – Mansfield had a lot on the line when it traveled to its biggest rival on Friday night. A win against Franklin would clinch at least a share of a third straight league title for the Hornets, while senior center Meg Hill was only seven points away from reaching 1,000 for her career.

With a layup off a feed from Mady Bendanillo late in the first quarter, Hill (17 points, nine rebounds) made quick work of her accomplishment, but the Hornets needed to battle to the end to pull out a 62-48 victory that sealed a three-peat of Kelley-Rex titles.

“We had a chance to come over here to get a share of the title with a 1,000-point scorer, lets get it all done tonight,” said Mansfield coach Mike Redding. “I’m glad it’s over and now we can relax and a win against KP to win it outright takes a little pressure off when we play OA (in the league finale).”

Hill got on the board off the opening tip, as Franklin allowed the Hornets to take a quick lead in order to get points for senior forward Kate Morse, who is out for the season with an injury.

Ann Maher got off to a red-hot start from the outside to help Mansfield stretch the floor and open up an early lead. She hit the first of three from beyond the arc in the quarter off a Hill feed and then Hill knocked down a jumper for a 7-2 advantage. After the Panthers tied it up, another Maher three was followed by another jumper by Hill.

Ali Brigham (11 rebounds) hit a jumper, the first two of her team-high 16 points, but Maher again was able to answer with another shot from long distance. Sitting just one-point from 1,000, Hill reached the milestone with a transition basket, off a feed from Bendanillo (eight assists).

Hill, who became just the second female player in Mansfield history to reach 1,000 points, passed the credit for her milestone on to her teammates. She said, "I don't shoot on my own. I don't dribble the ball. So, passes from them are really how I get my points and I really couldn't have done it without them."

After a timeout to celebrate Hill's career mark, Bendanillo closed out the first with a three for a 20-9 lead. The Hornets finished with nine threes as a team.

"We knew Maher was a good shooter and you try to rotate the defense to her and Meg and other set some good screens and she knocked down some quick ones but I thought it was the supporting cast that really shot well for them and really made the difference tonight," said Franklin coach John Leighton.

Franklin did not back down and rallied in the second quarter. Mansfield tried to switch up defenses to limit Brigham and Bea Bondhus, but Breanna Atwood (10 points) banked in a three-pointer and got behind the defense for a layup off a feed by Megan O'Connell. O'Connell also scored six in the second, finding space at the high post.

"Our kids battled back," said Leighton. "The shots kept falling for them but we kept battling back and working to get twos. It was a slog, but we stayed with it. I thought at the end of the first quarter we'd find out really quick who we were and we rebounded pretty well."

Bendanillo (eight points) drilled a second three and Hill scored on an offensive rebound, but O'Connell's drive in the final minute cut the lead to just 29-26 at halftime.

"She got it done early," said Redding of Hill getting to 1,000 points, "but then after that they started to come on and had a great second quarter, but I thought we really came out in the third and reestablished ourselves with a good inside-outside game."

The Hornets broke the game open in the third quarter. Maher (15 points) hit the fourth of her five three-pointer on the night to get it started and Hill hit another jumper. Sydney Mulkern (nine points) scored five points in quick succession and suddenly it was a 13-point edge.

Bondhus (10 points) hit a three to get back within 10 but Mansfield showed its depth with Steph Kemp hitting a jumper, Emily Vigeant driving to the basket for two, and Erin Daniel draining a three to push the lead to 48-35 heading to the fourth.

Redding said, "We got a lot of points not by design. We just made smart passes against traps and found open people out of the offense."

Both teams found scoring a struggle at the start of the fourth and Franklin was able to chip away at the lead, getting it as close as 56-48 after Bondhus finished in traffic, but the Hornets went 6-for-6 from the line to close it out.

"I thought Bea and Ali were super-aggressive in the fourth quarter and we needed them to be," said Leighton. "All the shots didn't fall but I thought we got the looks that we needed and we got some defensive stops that we needed."

Wins at Franklin are always welcome for the Hornets. Four years ago a loss at Franklin cost Mansfield a share of the league title and the Panthers handed the Hornets their only league loss on the same court last season. So, Redding was pleased to walk away with the victory on Friday.

“Any win at Franklin is a tough one,” said Redding. “Both teams switching up defenses left and right and it seemed like both teams had answers. Ali played great, Meg played great, it was a great battle between two of the best teams in the Kelley-Rex.”

In between celebratory photos with teammates, family, and friends, Hill turned her attention not to the points she has scored in her career but to the fact that she has been part of three straight league championships. She said, “That’s what I really wanted. This is just a sidenote, but three league titles that’s really cool. I’m glad to be part of that.”

Mansfield (15-4, 13-1) can clinch the outright league title on Tuesday at King Philip. Franklin (11-7, 9-5) will try to bounce back when it travels to Attleboro.