

Mansfield survives Newton North surge to win tourney opener

Mar 1, 2018

By Mark Farinella



Mansfield High's Meg Hill, center, reaches for a rebound between Newton North High's Kelly Barberi, left, and Taylor Bailey during their MIAA Division 1 South Sectional first-round game Thursday night in Mansfield.

ERIC J. ADLER/for the sun chronicle

MANSFIELD — The nickname for the Newton North High School girls' basketball team is "Tigers," which aptly describes how its members played in the second half of Thursday night's game at Mansfield.

Fortunately for the host Hornets, the Tigers were more like lambs in the first half.

"Their level of intensity was just higher," Mansfield coach Mike Redding said after the MIAA Division 1-South first-round playoff game in the Albertini Gym, in which his third-seeded Hornets saw a 24-8 halftime lead, whittled to just seven points before they finally emerged with a 38-28 triumph.

Mansfield seemed well on its way to a decisive victory over the 14th-seeded Tigers (10-11) on the strength of a stifling defense that limited the visitors to the Hornets' home court to just two baskets in 20 tries over the first 16 minutes.

But the Tigers emerged from the lockers determined to not be humiliated in their tournament opener. A combination of successful outside shooting and the resolve to prevent Mansfield from fully utilizing the talents of 6-foot-3 center Meg Hill enabled them to stay within striking distance of the Hockomock Kelley-Rex champions.

Despite facing regular double-teaming and an occasional triple-team under the basket, Hill still managed 11 points and a dazzling 15 rebounds (13 off the defensive glass), taking just about every possible second-shot opportunity away from the Tigers.

“She didn’t get many one-on-ones,” Redding said. “They were just a little longer than when I watched them play earlier. They were pretty athletic on (defense), very aggressive, and we didn’t get into the bonus until a minute to go, so we didn’t get a lot of free throws.”

On top of that, the Hornets lacked their usual outside-shooting prowess, hitting just two of 20 tries outside the 3-point arc. And the increase in Newton North’s defensive intensity resulted in a lot of disruption for Mansfield’s halfcourt offense in the second half.

The Hornets ran off 11 unanswered points over a 3 1/2-minute span of the first quarter, with junior forward Maggie Danehy popping in a pair of baskets and dishing to Sydney Mulkern for a three.

Hill opened the second quarter with a traditional three-point play 40 seconds into play, but then the Hornets went scoreless for almost five full minutes before putting on a 7-0 sprint to the buzzer.

Mansfield got a drive by Mady Bendanillo, a short Hill jumper off Emily Vigeant’s feed, a free throw by Vigeant and a terrific follow-up putback by Mulkern of her own missed 3-pointer.



ERIC J. ADLER FOR THE SUN CHRONICLE
Mansfield High's Margaret Danehy puts up a shot in the lane over Newton North High's Izzi Bledsoe in the first quarter of their MIAA Division 1 South Sectional first-round game Thursday night in Mansfield.

Danehy had two baseline jumpers in the first 2:40 of the third quarter, but the Hornets went into another lull — and this time, Newton North’s Kelley Manley banged home a pair of treys to get her team back within 10.

Manley hit another three to open the fourth quarter to cut the deficit to 30-23. But with 2:31 left, Hill scored on a pass from Ann Maher for a 35-26 lead.

Neither team could score again until Newton North’s Caroline Alexander got open underneath and scored on a feed from Taylor Bailey to make it 35-28 with 55.2 seconds left.

But the Tigers were forced to foul to get the ball back, and Hill and Kara Bendanillo combined for three charity tosses in the last 47 seconds to put the game away.

Manley and Elizabeth Davis led Newton North with 11 points apiece, the latter hitting only one basket but sinking nine of 10 free throws before fouling out with 1:53 left.

Danehy added 11 points and Mulkern 10 for the 19-5 Hornets, who may have been a little rusty.

“Sometimes they say the first round’s the toughest,” said Redding, whose team entertains sixth-seed Wellesley at 4 p.m. Saturday. “We haven’t played in eight days, but it looked good in the first half.”

Mansfield 38, Newton North 28

NEWTON NORTH (28)

Manley 4-9 0-0 11, Reilly 0-0 0-0 0, Hoffman 0-0 0-0 0, Alexander 3-4 0-0 6, Bledsoe 0-2 0-0 0, Bailey 0-9 0-0 0, Landry 0-2 0-0 0, Davis 1-13 9-10 11, Barbieri 0-1 0-0 0, O'Neil 0-0 0-0 0, totals 8-40 9-10 28.

MANSFIELD (38)

Daniel 0-3 0-0 0, Vigeant 0-2 1-2 1, Mulkern 3-12 2-3 10, M.Bendanillo 2-8 0-0 4, Santos 0-0 0-0 0, Kemp 0-0 0-0 0, Maher 0-11 0-0 0, K. Bendanillo 0-2 1-2 1, Hill 4-10 3-3 11, Danehy 5-10 1-2 11, totals 14-48 8-12 38.

Team	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Final
Newton North	04	04	12	08	28
Mansfield	14	10	06	08	38

3-point goals—NN 3-10 (Manley 3-5, Landry 0-2, Davis 0-3), Mansfield 2-20 (Daniel 0-1, Mulkern 2-9, Maher 0-9, K. Bendanillo 0-1).

Rebounds--NN 34 (Bledsoe 7), Mansfield 44 (Hill 15).

Assists--NN 7 (Bledsoe 4), Mansfield 10 (Danehy 3).

Total fouls--NN 15, Mansfield 11.

Fouled out--Davis.