



Feb. 16, 2009

Meramec Men's Basketball Notches 20 Win Season With Big Weekend, Victory Over 2nd Ranked Penn Valley

Behind several role players, the STLCC-Meramec men's basketball team tallied its sixth 20 win season in the last seven years following a weekend home sweep of second ranked Penn Valley (Kansas City, MO) and North Central (Trenton, MO).

Freshman center **Dallis Johnson** (Lafayette) tipped in a missed shot at the buzzer for Meramec to capture a 79-77 upset of nationally second ranked Penn Valley Friday night (Feb. 13). The win was the eighth in a row for the Magic since a loss at Penn Valley Jan. 16.

"**Eddie White** (Parkway West) got a rebound, took it back up, it rolled off, Dallis was left on the weak side and he was really pretty uncontested but the clock was running down and he had to catch it off the rim and put it back in," said coach **Randy Albrecht**. "He did that and I felt sure it was good, and the referees thought it was good."

Also good was the game itself - a see-saw battle with the Magic ahead 37-36 at the half. Late in the game, it looked like a repeat of the teams' previous game where Meramec couldn't hold its lead.

"They had a little run and got up a little bit late in the game six or seven with six minutes to go," said coach Albrecht. "It looked like they were going to pull away but then we came back."

The comeback was powered by a Ford, sophomore guard **Rodney Ford** (Affton) who had a "quiet" 26 points and 12 rebounds while Johnson dropped in 19 points and collected 13 rebounds. Ford enjoyed an outstanding week as the high scorer in the weekend's games, and in an earlier week win over Forest Park.

"Ford showed you some of the reasons here again tonight where he's real strong inside at the basket, he gets determined to take it to the rim," said coach Albrecht. "He's got really big, strong hands and good body control, good understanding of the game. He's really become a go-to player for us."

Meramec definitely needed to "go to" it after Penn Valley having learned from its earlier loss to the Scouts.

"We handled their pressure and traps better this time around," said sophomore guard **Alonzo Wrickerson** (Webster Groves.) "We valued the ball as a team. In the previous game we kept turning the ball over when they would trap but this game we were passing through their traps and getting easy buckets and getting to the free throw line."

The next day, a fatigued and emotionally drained Meramec squad had to find its intensity some 18 hours later to battle another Region XVI foe in North Central. Similar parity existed between these two teams - in their first match up Jan. 17 it took an Alonzo Wrickerson three pointer at the buzzer to down the Pirates 82-80.

Given the setting, a 31 all tie at the half was no surprise to anyone. However, early in the second half as the two teams battled for control of the lead, another role player stepped up in sophomore guard **Drew Moore** (Northwest.) Moore drilled three pointer after three pointer, four in all, to quash North Central's momentum and help Meramec pull away to an eventual 76-61 win.

"It felt good, they were all going in, it felt like the basket's pretty big," said Moore. "I knew I was going to try and catch fire and that's what happened. I think we need different people to step up at different times so it's good when I can do it."

Moore scored all 14 of his points in the second half to boost the Magic over North Central and a 6-1 mark against regional opponents. And the hot Meramec team has won eleven of its last twelve games. The Magic have three games remaining in the regular season before the Region XVI Tournament Mar. 3-7 at Westminster College.

"We've got a lot of momentum going into the right part of the season so if we keep getting better good things could happen," said Moore.

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Meramec Women Savor Win Over N. Central; Prep For Post Season

The STLCC-Meramec women's basketball team put an exclamation point on their final meaningful regular season game Saturday (Feb. 14) at home, running away from Region XVI foe North Central 76-60.

The Magic (14-15) trailed by 10 points in the first half at 28-18, and at the half 34-32. But **Ashton Whitehurst's** (Francis Howell North) three point shot with 13:21 remaining gave Meramec the lead for good at 45-44.

"We just got a slow start," said coach **Steve Jarvis**. "We just couldn't kind of get things going a little bit. Finally we started pushing the ball inside a little bit more and I think **Cynthia Abernathy** (Timberland) stepped up and did some different things for us that we've been trying to work on. She pulled some of their big people outside and made a couple three pointers."

Earlier in the season North Central had upended Meramec 80-72 making the win even sweeter. Also satisfying was the balanced scoring in the victory: Abernathy with 18 points, **Latavia Doss** (Francis Howell) with 17, **Capri Savage** (Orofino, ID) had 16, and Whitehurst scored 15 points. Doss and Barry also dominated the boards as Doss pulled down 16 rebounds and Barry 15.

"This is what we thought they could do," said coach Jarvis. "They match up against region opponents pretty well and we ought to be able to go in and out leap some people inside and that's what we're trying to accomplish."

The Magic are also hoping to accomplish their first regional crown in three years. They'll play a non-conference game Tuesday (Feb. 17) at home against the Fontbonne JV squad at 7 p.m. to end the regular season. On Saturday (Feb. 21), Meramec hosts a first round Region XVI game at 1 p.m. where the opponent will be either STLCC-Florissant Valley or STLCC-Forest Park.

The toss of a coin will decide who the Magic play Saturday. Meramec is tied for the third seed with Penn Valley so school officials will meet this week to flip a coin. If Meramec retains the third seed, they'll host sixth seed Florissant Valley Saturday. If they lose the flip, the opponent will be fifth seed Forest Park. The semi-finals and title game will be played at second seeded North Central Feb. 27-28. Cottey College of Nevada, MO is the top seed. Jarvis is optimistic given the relative parity of the teams.

“We’ve beaten everybody in the region at least one time, so going into the tournament we feel like we have just as good a chance as anybody else and if we have the effort like we had today I think we’ll be alright,” he said.

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Magic Wrestling Squad Qualifies 9 For Nationals; 3rd Place Team Finish At Central District Tourney

The STLCC-Meramec wrestling team advanced nine grapplers out of a possible ten to the National Tournament at Sunday’s Central District Zone Tournament in Chicago while taking a third place team finish. Just one point separated the top three teams.

Defending national champion **Aaron Senzee** (Kearney, MO) won the 141 lb. title, while freshman **T.T. Prayther** (N. Myrtle Beach, SC) captured the 125 lb. crown. Winning second place medals were sophomores **Donald Woods** (McCluer North) at 165 and **Eddie McCray** (Plainfield, NJ) at 149 and freshmen **Anthony Almanza** (Ponway, CA) at 157 and **Travis Pettengill** (Kearsley, MI) at 197.

Coming in fourth were freshmen **Craig Chiles** (Hillsboro, MO) at 133, **Nick Smith** (Collins Hill, GA) at 174, and **Chauncey Smith** (Hazelwood Central) at 184.

The NJCAA National Tournament will be held Feb. 27-28 in Rochester, Minn. Last year Meramec took a second place team finish.