

Greater Lowell clinches tourney berth

Som, Tanner lead Gryphons scoring attack

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PUBLISHED: February 11, 2020 at 10:09 pm | UPDATED: February 11, 2020 at 10:09 pm

BILLERICA – The Greater Lowell Tech girls basketball team couldn't have picked a more opportune time to turn in its most complete performance of the season.

The Gryphons swarmed to the ball on defense, did a great job rebounding and continually scored fast break points in transition while securing a state tournament berth with a 64-50 victory over longtime rival Shawsheen Tech in a Commonwealth Athletic Conference Large School Division game Tuesday night.

Aliza Som paced Greater Lowell's offense with 21 points, while Kaelynn Tanner tossed in 18 points for the Gryphons.

Susanna Gillis led the way on offense for Shawsheen Tech with 20 points.

Greater Lowell improved its overall record to 10-6. The Gryphons can capture the CAC Large crown with a win at Northeast Metro Tech Friday at 5:30 p.m.

"I was just talking to (Greater Lowell assistant) Pat Moriarty and I think it's 11 years in a row (we've qualified for the tourney)," said Brian Martin, whose Gryphons will play in the Division 4 Central sectional. "We have a nice little tradition going. So it is a good feeling. The league has been very even this year, so most games have been under 10 points. That was the best we've played all year."

Throughout the game, Greater Lowell's defense created turnovers that resulted in points. The Gryphons were leading 17-6 at the end of the first quarter and had a 33-21 advantage at halftime.

Greater Lowell broke the game open by consistently attacking the basket in the third quarter. The Gryphons were up by as many as 22 points in the fourth.

"That's something we do in practice every single day," said Martin. "We have the speed drill where we are constantly going forward and looking for that pass ahead.

"We have a bunch of athletes who can catch the ball, put the ball on the floor and finish at the basket. Tonight they really did that. That's the most points we've scored in a while."

Greater Lowell received strong two-way efforts from Nellie Chan (8 points), Alanis Velez (6 points), Mersedee Comtois Pena (5 points), Annie LaGrega (2 points), Felicia Melendez (2 points), Gienna Ramos (2 points) and Emma Rossino.

“There have been games when Aliza and Kaelynn score probably 75% of our points,” said Martin. “But tonight, it seemed more players were involved. Nellie had a good game. Alanis had a good game. Our scoring was more evenly distributed.”

Shawsheen (7-10) played hard from start to finish. Gillis, Kerry Brown (7 points), Karissa Rogato (6 points) and Lindsay McCarthy (5 points) helped spark the Rams offense.

“We played hard the whole game,” said Shawsheen coach Kate Marshall. “We have a young team, but they are certainly tenacious. They were able to sort of pull themselves together at the end. Unfortunately, we can’t pull ourselves together in the beginning.”

Shawsheen’s standout junior guard, Shelby Bourdeau, did a great job directing the offense. Bourdeau scored two points and had a great game passing the ball.

This was Bourdeau’s final game of the season as she is scheduled to undergo heart surgery on Friday. Bourdeau is expected to make a full recovery and return to the court next winter.

“She’s a junior captain, so next season she’ll be back,” said Marshall. “She had a great game. She leads the team in points, assists and rebounds. Whatever you ask of her she does. You don’t find players like that very often.”

Bourdeau received hugs from teammates and well-wishers as she left the court after the game. She can’t wait to get back to playing basketball.

“After a little recovery everything is supposed to work out perfectly and I’ll be able to comeback better than ever,” said Bourdeau.