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Steighorst tourney ends on emotional note

Hawks add HOF coach's initials to jerseys

By the Journal Sports Staff
Tuesday, December 16, 2008 1:23 PM CST

It was a great ending.

The Gene Steighorst Basketball Tournament closed on a winning note - several, in fact. First, Hillsboro and Howell Central delivered a bang-up championship game that wasn't settled until the final moments. Second, it was the perfect finish for Coach Chris O'Connell to have the Hawks climb into the stands at midcourt and present the championship trophy to Marilyn Steighorst.



Andrew Jansen photo -- Hillsboro Coach Chris O'Connell and the Hillsboro Hawks present the Gene Steighorst Tournament championship trophy to Marilyn Steighorst.

Marilyn Steighorst, of course, is the widow of the legendary Hillsboro coach and teacher Gene Steighorst. This was the first Steighorst Tournament since Gene died last summer, and O'Connell and the Hillsboro High administration, with A.D. Mark Groner and Principal Cheryl Aylesworth leading the way, did a terrific job of taking time to remember the Missouri Basketball Hall of Famer and include his family in the event. ...

There were a lot of winning touches throughout the tournament. Obviously, it is an wonderful gesture to have Gene Steighorst's initials on the Hawks jerseys this season. Also, the tournament program had a great shot of Gene on the cover and several winning shots inside. And, finally, it was a nice surprise for the Hawks to present Mrs. S with flowers before the start of the championship game. ...

Marilyn Steighorst made a point of thanking Coach Larry Anders's Howell Central team for sticking around and cheering when the Hawks returned the championship trophy to her. "That was very classy," she said. ... Anders was nothing but gracious as he gathered his team for their exit Saturday. "I'm excited for them," he said, noting that Saturday was a big night for the Steighorsts and everyone connected to the Hillsboro hoops program. ...

Yes, in case you were wondering, the building was filled to the rafters with not only Steighorsts - four generations put in appearances during the tournament - but with Hawks basketball coaches. Saturday, four of the five coaches who followed Gene Steighorst were on hand for the tournament championship. Mark Steighorst, who took over after his dad retired in 1989, of course, was there. Bill Gunn, now heading the Kirkwood hoops program, also popped in for the final. Groner, now the Hawks A.D., was there to keep the tournament trains running on time, and, obviously, O'Connell completed the coaching lineup on hand for the final.

PREPARED, INDEED: Just a few more pen strokes are needed before every detail of the upcoming River Trails (Jefferson County) District Boy Scouts basketball championships are in place. Gene Terry, organizing the event for the 29th season, reports that there will be 14 teams in the field for the Jan. 10-11 scout tournament at Windsor Middle School. A



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week before the Boy Scouts tip off their tournament, the River Trails Webelos will hold their eighth annual tournament at Windsor Middle. The Webelos tournament will have seven entries this year. ... The Webelos championship is scheduled for 6 p.m., Jan. 3. The scouts championship game is set for 7 p.m., Jan. 11.

STANDING TALL: Tony Boyle has settled in as a pretty solid Div. I basketball player in his senior season at SIU. The former Jefferson County Conference MVP had his first career double-double earlier this month when he had 13 points and 12 rebounds in a 66-64 loss against Charlotte. The former De Soto standout had his fourth double-figure scoring game of the season Sunday in a loss at Nevada. The 6-foot-8 Boyle scored a season-best 14 in the loss.

SLAM TRYOUT: Ladies this is the last chance this year to expand your athletic horizons. The St. Louis Slam will hold its last open tryout session for the 2009 women's full-contact football season on Friday. The tryout session will be from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at CBC High School. Players must be 18 and have proof of insurance to take part in the tryout. There's a \$10 tryout fee.

With some help from area athletes Kelly Kozlen and Myrt Davis, the Slam went 8-1 and reached the playoffs last spring/summer.

SOCCER STANDOUT: Congrats to Zach Rohan of Pevely. The 10-year-old finished second in the Missouri Knights of Columbus Soccer Challenge last month. Zach earned a spot in the state contest at Westphalia after winning the district competition at Festus and the regional at Perryville. He walked off with the second-place trophy at the state event by winning a tie-breaker.

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