

Lady Rockets fall to Jackson Co. 75-51

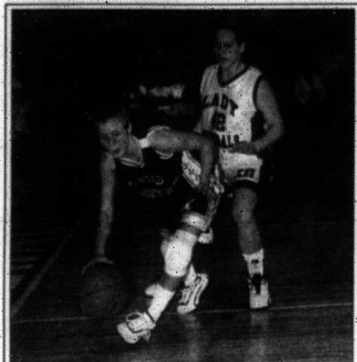
It's not easy when the number one team in the state, and number two in the nation, is in your district, but the Lady Rockets acquitted themselves well last Friday night, keeping the game close through the first half before the Jackson County Generals pulled away for the 75-51 win.

Senior Jessie Rickles eluded and dashed her way through the first half, coming up with numerous steals and

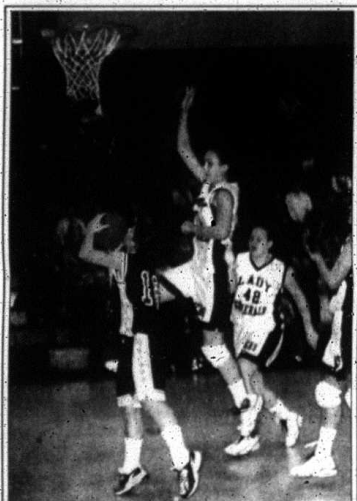
sharing scoring honors for the half with senior Rachelle Hammond at 9 each.

The Rockets started from an 8-0 deficit in the first quarter before junior Amber Denney put in two free throws and a basket. Rickles added four and Hammond came through with 3 to make it an 18-11 first quarter score.

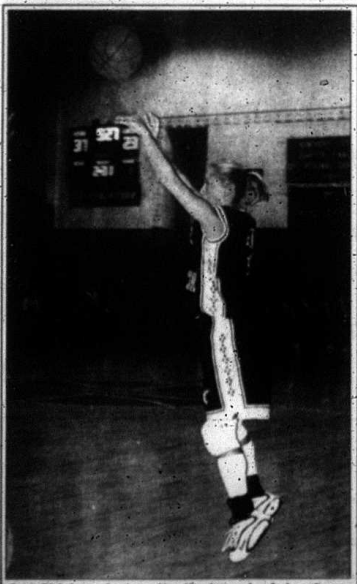
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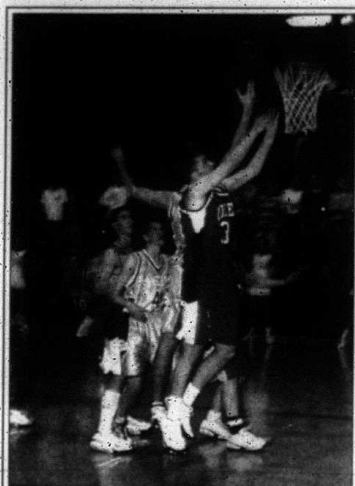
Jessie Hayes tries to shake loose a Lady General defender.



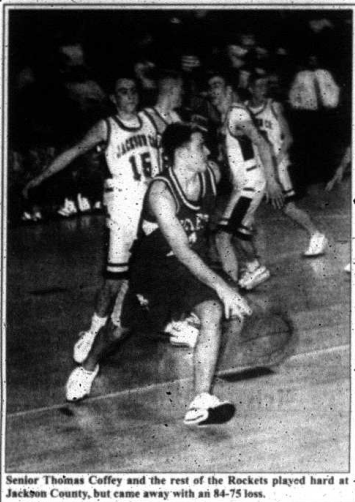
Amber Fain goes for two points against Jackson County last Friday night. The Lady Rockets went down to defeat 75-51 to the number one ranked team in the state.



Jessie Rickles goes for three of her 18 points against Jackson County last Friday night.



Sophomore Aaron Anderkin scored 29 points, 15 in the first quarter against Jackson County, but the Generals came back to win 84-75.



Senior Thomas Coffey and the rest of the Rockets played hard at Jackson County, but came away with an 84-75 loss.

Bobby Labonte earned his title

By Gerald Hodges

The Racing Reporter
Bobby Labonte, the 2001 Winston Cup Champion has earned the respect of both drivers and racing fans.

At the 12th annual T. Wayne Robertson Preview the Winston-Salem, North Carolina, January 6, three-time Winston Cup champion Jeff Gordon called Labonte, "his favorite driver."

In addition to being well liked because of his driving style on the track, the 36-year-old Texan is the only driver to have claimed both Winston Cup and Busch Series championships.

He and Terry are also the only brothers to have won the Winston Cup championship.

At the beginning of the 2000 season members of the media thought the driver of Joe Gibbs' No. 18 Interstate Batteries Pontiac would be one of the drivers likely to claim the trophy at season's end.

"I thought we would be able to challenge for the championship in a lot of ways," Labonte said. "We had everybody jacked up like we needed. The team was excited about starting off a new season and so was I. But, at the same time, we were coming off a good season, so we knew we couldn't let up."

"There were some areas that we needed to work on. I learned a lot of things that made me better. I think the team, as a whole, got better throughout the year. When you run up front like we did you learn a lot. You can't have an average 10th place finish and expect to win a championship."

Even though Labonte did his part on Sunday, he also took part in team activities when it came to getting the right car setup.

"He really understands what it's like to be a mechanic on a race team," crew chief Jimmy Marker said. "He understands what it's like to be a

broom pilot in the race shop. From the very small jobs to very important jobs, he's been through all those situations."

"He's not removed from the race team. A lot of times you'll get a driver who comes in, drives the car, goes out and even though he's a good chassis guy, he's not an integral part of the team. Bobby is a little different. He is a part of this race team. He does care about the guys. He does understand their daily jobs. He knows and honors their abilities and what they sacrifice to get him a race car that's capable of going out and winning races."

Labonte began his racing career as a crew member at Hagan Racing in 1984 before going to work for car builder Jay Hedgecock in 1987. His first title came in 1987 at Caraway Speedway in Asheboro, North Carolina where he won the late model stock championship. In 1991, he scored his first Busch Series victory at Bristol and won the Busch Series points championship. The following year, he won three races but lost an opportunity to win a second Busch championship by just a few points to Joe Nemecek.

He ran his first full Winston Cup season in 1993 for Bill Davis Racing. The highlight of the team's season was winning the Bud Pole at Richmond, Virginia. He continued the 1994 season with Bill Davis, finishing 21st in the final points standings.

Near the end of the 1994 season, Bill Davis' sponsor, Maxwell House Coffee, informed him they would not be back as sponsor of the No. 22 Ford. Labonte was given his release from the team.

"My thought was, 'Am I going to be jobless for the next season or what?' because I know how the deal works," Labonte said.

Labonte was standing in the ga-

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Rockets lose to Jackson, Somerset

The Rockcastle County Rockets lost two in a row last week, falling to district rival Jackson County on Friday night 84-75 and then losing to the Somerset Briar Jumpers on Saturday night 67-65 on a last minute shot.

It is never easy to go into the Generals camp and win, and Friday night was no exception.

The Rockets loss was even tougher to take because they took the lead in the opening moments with a three by Jeremy Neely and kept it until 5:27 to go in the game.

The Rockets immediately established their outside game, with Aaron Anderkin hitting five threes in the first quarter along with Neely's three threes and Aaron Cash also with five points in the first.

The Rockets took their biggest lead of the night into the second quarter, leading the Generals 31-19 at the end of the first.

Anderkin stayed hot throughout the game, hitting a total of nine threes and adding another bucket for the game high 29 points.

The Rockets saw their lead dwindle to five points at the half, leading the Generals by only five, 44-39. Only two players scored for the Rockets in the third, Anderkin and Cash, but the Rockets managed to outscore the Generals and hold onto the six point, 58-52 lead.

Things turned sour for the Rockets in the fourth, as the Generals went on a 7-0 run in the opening minutes to take their first lead of the night at 59-58. The well-coached Generals then took over the game and never looked back.

The lack of an inside presence throughout the game, the fact that the Rockets missed 12 free throws and a General team that wouldn't go away - especially in the fourth quarter when it counted the most - all contributed to the Rockets 84-75 defeat.

The Rockets traveled to Somerset Saturday night for a much closer game with the Briar Jumpers, again coming home with the 67-65 loss.

The lead went back and forth in this game, with several lead changes and ties throughout the game. The first and second quarters both ended with the game tied, at 20-20 and 34-34 respectively.

The Rockets held the lead at the end of the third quarter 49-47 and also in the final minutes of the fourth quarter until the game was tied 65 all with 32 seconds to go.

The Rockets did not call a timeout and worked the ball until Aaron Cash took it in for a layup that did not find the hole, and the loose ball went to the Briar Jumpers with 4.3 seconds to go.

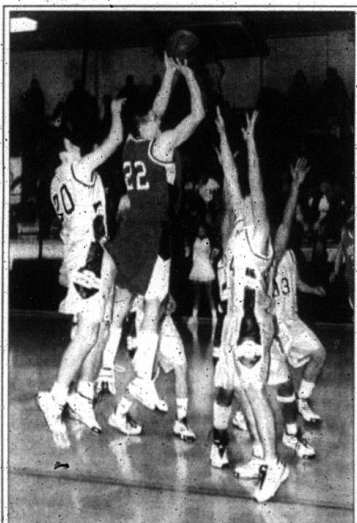
After much discussion in the timeout, the Briar Jumpers took the ball the length of the floor for a 8 foot shot in the lane that did find the hole and gave the Briar Jumpers the 67-65 last second win.

The inside game was reestablished against Somerset, with Andrew Hammond leading all scores with 20, one of those baskets being a rebounding dunk.

Rockcastle Linescores

Rockcastle 31 13 14 15 95
Jackson Co. 19 30 13 32 84
Aaron Anderkin 29, Jeremy Neely 17, Aaron Cash 17, Andrew Hammond 5, Josh Rowland 5

Rockcastle 20 14 15 16 65
Somerset 20 14 13 21 67
Andrew Hammond 20, Aaron Anderkin 15, Aaron Cash 12, Jeremy Neely 8, Thomas Coffey 5, Josh Rowland 3



Junior Andrew Hammond scored 20 points at Somerset on Saturday night, but the Rockets lost on a last second shot, 67-65.



Senior Jeremy Neely pumped in 17 at Jackson County on Friday night, but the Rockets fell short 84-75. The Rockets will play host to North Laurel Friday night. It will be homecoming.