

## St. Joseph's, McCluer North reach title game



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**FLORISSANT** • It took about a quarter for the St. Joseph Academy girls basketball team to adjust to the perimeter speed and strength of Hazelwood East.

But once they did, the Angels took off and soared to an easy 74-34 victory in the Class 5 District 7 semifinals at McCluer North High School.

St. Joseph's (15-10) advanced to the district championship Saturday at 3 p.m. against host McCluer North.

"We started a little slow," Angels senior guard Mary Barton said. "We picked up our energy in the second quarter and we were able to keep it

going, because we know every game could be our last."

St. Joseph's trailed after the first quarter, 14-13, but used a 9-0 run at the start of the second quarter to launch itself to a double-digit lead.

Sophomore Kelly McLaughlin scored 12 of her game-high 19 points in the frame. McLaughlin did all of her damage within five feet of the hoop.

"It was a whole team effort," McLaughlin said. "I was doing my best to make myself available and my teammates were getting me the ball. My goal is to crash the boards and get every rebound. I had a little bit of a height advantage on them, so it worked out a lot of the time."

Barton finished with 12 points, while senior Nikki Tracy, freshman Alex Kerr and junior Sophie Vogt all had eight points apiece.

St. Joseph's outscored the Spartans 31-13 in the second quarter and 24-8 in the third quarter. That explosion allowed coach Julie Matheny to give playing to 14 players, 12 of whom scored.

The Angels, who had a bye in the district quarterfinals, hadn't played in nine days and Matheny wanted to get her players as much court time as possible. So with the game well in hand, she emptied her bench.

"We hadn't played in 10 days, nine days, so we really needed to play," Matheny said. "It

almost felt like our opener. The girls adjusted well and we had a little advantage with height. It helped us rebounding and on second-chance points. Kelly (McLaughlin) had a great game. She has a nice tough around the basket."

Senior Destiny Wiliford scored 16 points, eight of them in the first quarter, to lead the Spartans (12-14). Junior Cearrah Huddleston added seven points.

East looked good early, but completely broke down in the second and third quarters being outscored 55-17. The team only loses two seniors from this year's squad giving coach Terry Creamer a good nucleus for next season.

In another district semifinal game:

**McCLUER NORTH 40, LADUE 37** • Neither team had much success getting the ball in the basket to start the game.

It was scoreless with 3:33 to go in the first quarter when sophomore North Eriyana Simmons hit two free throws to give her team a 2-0 lead. It didn't lift the lid off the Stars' basket, but it did spark Ladue to an 8-0 run.

By the end of the quarter the Rams (20-6), the No. 10 team in the STLhighschoolsports.com large-schools rankings, held a 10-3 lead.

North (16-8) stepped up its defense and had a little better success shooting the ball in the second quarter and was able to tie the game 19-19 at halftime.

At the end of the third quarter, North held a slim 31-30 lead.

"We played terrible the entire game," North coach Patrick Dougherty said. "Nothing that we did was what we wanted. But we got the job done. Win and move on. We got lucky. We got really lucky. Ladue knew what we were going to do and they stopped us."

North sophomore Anasha Hurst hit a jumper in the lane to tie the game 37-37 late in fourth period.

Neither team could score in the next minute, missing a combined four shots and three free throws. Finally, with 1:10 to go, North sophomore Kortni Collins hit a runner in the lane to make it 39-37.

Junior Lauryn Hudson added a free throw for North to close out the scoring.

"I hope, since we'll be playing for the championship, that the girls show up ready to play," Dougherty said. "St. Joe's is very good and very well-coached."