



More national exposure for LMC women's basketball

Red Hawks qualify for championship tourney for 5th straight season

By **BEN SANDERS**
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Lake Michigan College will send a roster of mostly freshmen to the NJCAA Division II women's basketball national tournament.

Coach Jason Cooper doesn't feel like inexperience will be a problem for his team, however — not after the Red Hawks won six overtime games, including an upset of Kalamazoo Valley in the district final.

"Anything's possible when you get in to a tournament," Cooper said. "The way that we have pulled off six overtime wins this year, this team has played tougher than being freshmen. They've learned a lot through those battles.

"They're not afraid of the moment, and not being afraid of the moment is half the battle."

First game
1 p.m. Tuesday



No. 10 seed LMC vs. No. 7 seed North Iowa Area Community College

The 16-team tournament runs Tuesday through Saturday at Johnson Community College in Overland Park, Kan. Teams are guaranteed at least two games, but a loss takes them out of the running for the national title.

LMC is in the national tournament for the fifth straight season and sixth in the past seven years.

"It's amazing, the run that these young ladies have helped this program on," Cooper said. "I'm amazed at their effort and dedication to the program. We're so excited.

"We have an opportunity to make something special

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Don Campbell / HP staff See more photos: heraldpalladium.mycapture.com
Lake Michigan College's Hailey Maas works the ball upcourt as Jackson College's Paige Niciporek defends during a March 2 game. Lake Michigan College will participate in the NJCAA Division II women's basketball national tournament this week.

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happen.”

LMC is seeded 10th, and opens against No. 7 seed North Iowa Area Community College at 1 p.m. EDT Tuesday. The Trojans average nearly 10 3-pointers made per game.

“They’re a very strong program,” Cooper said. “They’re an offense-dominated, 3-point shooting program. They lead the country in 3-point makes and attempts. Very tough opponent to prepare for. We have to be ready to defend the 3-point line and still worry about penetration to the basket.”

LMC has lots of fire-

power of its own. Guard Hailey Maas is averaging 20.9 points, 7.1 rebounds and 4.7 assists per game, leading the Red Hawks in all three categories. Guard Kelsee Kinder scores 16.5 points per game.

“Hailey Maas has been our backbone of our team this year,” Cooper said. “She’s just battled tremendously, being a focus of other team’s defenses.

“Kinder is a spark-plug. She can change a game and open up a game very quickly with transition baskets.”

Cooper said it’s important for the team to have a third scorer, but who that player is varies from game to game. Tammy Lee is averaging 10 points per game,

Shannon Dingman 9.7, and Dennee Brown 7.8.

The Red Hawks are undersized, but have still been an excellent rebounding team this season, outrebounding opponents by an average of more than 18 per game.

“Our main goal is we try to play bigger than what we are,” Cooper said. “To do that, you have to mix up your defenses, look at advantages you might have and capitalize on opportunities you have from the opponent’s defense.

“Being a smaller team, there are some disadvantages, but there are advantages of other teams having to guard us.”

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