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S.E. Pa. girls' basketball season in review

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by **STEVEN M. FALK / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

Boyetown's Abby Kapp shoots over Methacton's Jackie Cerchio during the the Pioneer Athletic Conference Championship on Feb. 15.

by **Kate Harman**, STAFF WRITER

Some teams peak at the right time, getting hot just when they need to to spark a postseason run.

Going 19-2 over the final 21 games of the year is a little more than that.

That's precisely what the Boyertown Bears, the team of the year, accomplished this season, as the Pioneer Athletic Conference champions went on to win 27 games and the program's first state title, a 46-35 victory over North Allegheny for the PIAA Class 6A crown.

After losing in the District 1 quarterfinals, Jason Bieber's squad regrouped to claim the six-seed heading in states, where the squad went on to beat three-time defending champion Cumberland Valley, Garnet Valley, and Northampton before its most impressive win of the season: a 39-37 defeat of the Catholic League champions, Cardinal O'Hara.

All the while the Bears thrived in their underdog role, playing excellent team defense and getting big contributions from a variety of players.

Coach of the year

Lynn Carroll, Souderton

Fourteen-game turnarounds usually don't happen, especially when you play in arguably the most competitive conference in District 1. But that's exactly what Carroll's Souderton squad did this season, turning last year's 8-14 overall record that saw the team win just five Suburban One Continental Conference contests into a 22-8 mark this year.

Under Carroll, Souderton didn't just win the program's first state playoff game, it reached the PIAA Class 6A semifinals and were moments from advancing to the championship game, barring a controversial foul call. And they did it with defense, allowing their opponents to score fewer than 40 points 26 times over the course of the year.

Even more impressive? The squad started three juniors and two sophomores, four of whom had no postseason experience prior to this February.

Rookie of the year

Maddie Burke, Central Bucks West

No freshman turned more heads more often than the Bucks' Burke. A starter for all 28 games, the guard averaged 9.7 points a contest, while filling up the stat sheet. On the season, Burke knocked down 50 three-pointers, grabbed 143 rebounds, garnered 47 steals, and blocked 106 shots, making her a threat on both ends of the floor.

Team to watch

Germantown Academy

A preseason anterior cruciate ligament injury to veteran guard Cat Polisano looked like it was going to spell trouble for the Patriots. Instead, the team rallied, finishing the season 21-10, as cochampions of the Inter-Ac and runners-up in the Pennsylvania Independent Schools Athletic Association (PAISAA) state tournament.

With 10 total freshmen or sophomores on the roster, there were growing pains at times, but the experience the talented and scrappy group - including ninth graders Maddie Vizza, Jaye Haynes, and Elle Stauffer - got this season will be critical next year for GA.

Also returning will be Alexa Naessens, a 6-foot-1 forward and Colgate recruit, as will explosive guard - and three-point threat - Rachel Balzer, both scoring threats. With Polisano back for her senior year, GA looks like an instant contender.

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