

By Pastor Vince Carrig

Sports Writer

The St. Pat's Lady Irish served Perkins County notice that the Lady Plainsmen will have a very short playoff existence in February if things did not radically change with a 74-40 blowout win in North Platte last Tuesday (Dec. 11).

Continuing on their current courses, 6-0 St. Pat's figures to meet 1-5 Perkins County in the first round of the sub-district playoffs later this winter.

The Lady Plainsmen watched a parade of alley-oop passes to forward Sam Byrn, who remained in the air before banking them into the net. They saw a steady stream of Mandy O'Malley swiping dribbles and running them to the hole. Brittany Lawrence, the 6-foot-3 center and the Lady Irish all-time leading shot blocker, continually fed the basket from right underneath of it for 13 points.

"St. Pat's is a well-balanced team with a full lineup of skilled players," Lady Plainsmen Head Coach Deanne Bishop said after the game. "We did a good job containing a few of their starters, but their other players were able to step up their own games and fill that gap."

St. Pat's used their speed and athleticism to execute a defensive press that frequently allowed the Lady Irish to get the ball back right after scoring.

Accurate with the jump shot and able to defy gravity longer than most, the senior shooting guard Byrn led all scorers with 20 points.

Willing to line it up and let it go from behind the arc, senior point guard Mandy O'Malley registered 18 points.

Perkins County guard Michi Prante's six first quarter points helped keep St. Pat's in the same zip code for six minutes of the game. She lofted a shot high off of the right corner of the backboard to pull the red squad to within two points, 10-8.

But after distance runner Mandy O'Malley picked a pass and dropped it down and Shelby Alberry created an "and one" from a shuffling pivot, North Platte took a 19-8 lead.

Only swing forward Carlie Waitley's seven points in the second quarter and 14 in the game prevented the Lady Plainsmen's burial under an avalanche of points.

Waitley's first of two three-pointers that deflected high off the left side of the backboard only served to offset reserve guard Kari Slattery's steal and score that gave St. Pat's a 35-15 lead.

Any momentum shift in their favor the Perkins County girls might have received from center Shania Metcalf clearing Alberry off of her rebound by visiting Alberry's nose with her elbow in the second quarter lasted only briefly.

Metcalf tallied on a spin move from the right block immediately afterward to cut the Lady Plainsmen deficit to nine points (21-12), but Mandy O'Malley struck for three points to refocus the Lady Irish.

The team in white with the marshmallow-round green numbers inflated its lead to 36 as the junior Lawrence put back a third rebound mid-way through the fourth quarter.

Six of Mandy O'Malley's steals directly resulted in points for the Lady Irish.

Next Action

The Lady Plainsmen host former coach Chris Mestl's first return to Pritchett Court since leaving for Ogallala earlier this year. The 2-3 Lady Indians won close games against Lexington and Chase County but dropped decisions to Minden, Sutherland and Hershey by an average of 21 points.

P.C. 40, St. Pat's 74

Perkins Co. 10 10 12 8-40

NP. St. Pat's 19 22 21 12-74

Scoring leaders-Perkins County: Waitley 4FG (2[x3])-14; Prante 4 0/2FT-8; Hoffert, J. 1 (1) 1/2-6; Metcalf 3-6; St. Pat's: Byrn 9 2/2-20; O'Malley, M. 6 (2)-18; Lawrence 6 1/2-13; Alberry 2 5/5-9; O'Malley, A. 3 2/2-8.