

SPORTS

41 years after their last state appearance, Kewaskum girls are finally...

BRINGING HOME THE GOLD



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum's girls basketball team celebrates after defeating Milwaukee Academy of Science to win the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at Resch Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum's student section cheers on its girls basketball team during the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at the Resch Center.

Indians defeat Milwaukee Academy of Science 55-51 to claim first state title in program history

By Dave Radcliffe
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ASHWAUBENON — It was only fitting that Madi Dogs was the one at the bottom of the dog pile moments after the buzzer sounded.

That's not just because of the senior forward's surname. Dogs, a 1,000-point scorer, was the driving force for Kewaskum's girls basketball team dating back to when she was a sophomore and played a key role in guiding the Indians to their first state championship in program history when they knocked off Milwaukee Academy of Science 55-51 for the WIAA Division 3 title Saturday at the Resch Center.

But she got plenty of help

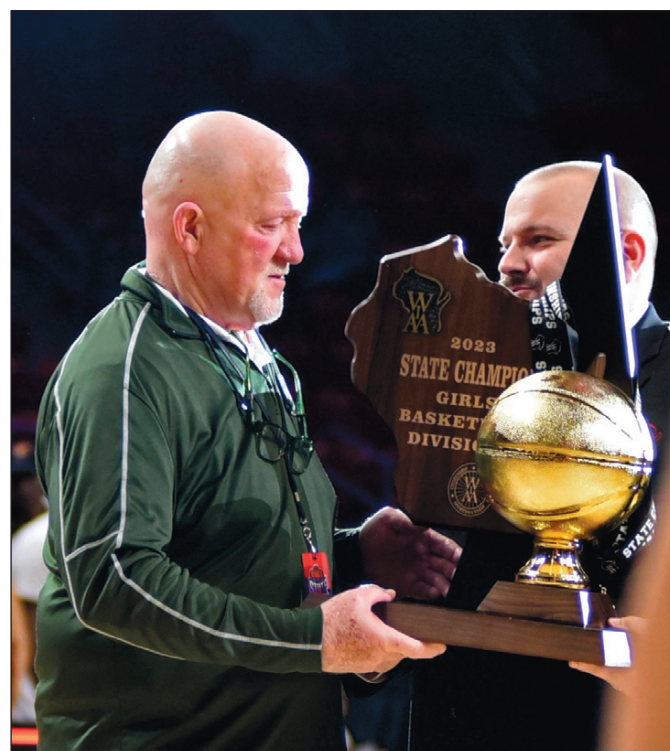
along the way — especially from one particular teammate on this day.

Julia Steger matched a career high with 23 points and the 5-foot-7 senior guard — at least that's what she's listed at — added 10 rebounds for a double-double as the third-seeded Indians outlasted the No. 4 seed Novas in a game that featured big run after big run.

"That 5-foot-5 kid had 10 rebounds for us today," Kewaskum first-year coach Mark Maley said. "When Madi got hurt (earlier in the season), I think she had a very similar game."

Now with Dogs by her side on the court, Steger picked one heck of a moment to do it again two days after

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Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum girls basketball coach Mark Maley is handed the gold ball after the Indians defeated Milwaukee Academy of Science in the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at Resch Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum senior forward Madi Dogs tries to get past Milwaukee Academy of Science junior guard/forward Parker Johnson during the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at the Resch Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum senior guard Grace Leitheiser drives between Milwaukee Academy of Science sophomore guard Jaeda Turner (left) and senior guard Lalani Ellis during the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at the Resch Center.

GOLDEN EAGLES 65, MUSKETEERS 51

Marquette wins Big East

Golden Eagles beat Musketeers to win first conference tournament title

By Ralph D. Russo
AP College Sports Writer

NEW YORK — The final night of the Big East Tournament never sounded like this before.

Tyler Kolek and No. 6 Marquette raced out to a hefty lead and didn't look back, beating No. 15 Xavier 65-51 on Saturday to win its first Big East championship after 18 seasons in the conference.

As the clock wound down on an historic victory by a storied program that had been longing for an elusive title, chants of "We are, Marquette!" echoed through Madison Square Garden.

"Marquette is a special place that has had a special basketball program for a long, long time," coach Shaka Smart said as he accepted the trophy. "We're so proud to bring a championship back to Milwaukee."

Kolek had 20 points and eight rebounds as the top-seeded Golden Eagles (28-6) dominated a Big East final that brought a Midwestern flavor to Midtown Manhattan.

The brash Big East player of the year, who vowed his team would prove doubters wrong before the season, shared hugs with his family and friends as confetti poured down on the Golden Eagles after the game.

"All the moments they've been through with me have led up to this moment right here," Kolek said. "To share that with my high school coach, my brother, my dad, my two best friends, it's special. There is no better feeling."

Smart's surprising team will head into the NCAA Tournament with a nine-game winning streak. Marquette's first appearance in the Big East championship game resulted in one of its best performances of a scintillating season.

Kolek's steal and layup made it 51-27 with 14:12 left. Less than a minute later, after two offensive rebounds by the Golden Eagles, David Joplin made a corner 3 to double up second-seeded Xavier (25-9).

Joplin finished with 12 points. Kolek was selected the tournament's Most Outstanding Player.

Adam Kunkel scored 12 points to lead the Musketeers, who had a five-game winning streak snapped. Leading scorer Souley Boum was held to



Associated Press

Marquette's Tyler Kolek, tournament MVP, takes a piece of the net after winning their game against Xavier for the championship of the Big East men's tournament on Saturday in New York.

one point on 0-for-9 shooting.

"I thought tonight there are times when their effort level and their quickness, their togetherness, their communication, it was like there were six players on defense against us," Xavier coach Sean Miller said. "We couldn't get a good shot, and that is to their credit."

Smart described his team's defense as "violent."

"Coming up here to New York, we've really played for the most part very, very sticky, tough defense," Smart said. "We're going to need that if we want to advance in the NCAA Tournament."

This was the first Big East title game since the conference dropped football in 2013 to not feature any of its longstanding Northeast members.

Still, the Milwaukee school, which joined in 2005, and the Cincinnati school, which joined in 2013, filled The Garden for the first 1 vs. 2 seed Big East Tournament final in 19 years.

It looked more like a 1-16 NCAA Tournament game for a while.

Marquette jumped out to a 21-4 lead, and never relented.

"It was huge," Smart said. "And our guys played with real force to start the game."

During a particularly splendid 2 1/2 minutes, Stevie Mitchell swished a corner 3, Kolek came off a screen to make another 3, Kam Jones got free for a reverse layup after a nifty hesitation move on the baseline and Kolek converted a layup off a give-and-go with Oso Ighodaro.

At that point, Marquette was up 33-

10 with 7:02 left in the first half and the Golden Eagles had not yet committed a turnover.

Marquette's only previous league tournament title was as a member of Conference USA in 1997.

Twenty-six years later, the Golden Eagles were able to clear the bench in the final minute of the Big East championship and their fans were finally able to make The Garden feel like home.

BIG PICTURE

Xavier: The Musketeers played what Miller called one of their best two-way games of the season in the semifinals Friday night against Creighton. Less than 24 hours later, they did almost nothing well. Xavier shot 34% from the field, forced only four turnovers and was held 12 points under its previous season low. The Musketeers fell to 0-2 in Big East championship games.

Marquette: Smart, who took VCU to a Final Four but never could find that consistent winning formula at Texas, guided a team picked to finish ninth in the Big East in the preseason coaches' poll to maybe its best season since Dwyane Wade led Marquette to a Final Four in 2003. The Golden Eagles tied a school record for victories set in 1970-71.

UP NEXT

Xavier: Miller will have the Musketeers back in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2018.

Marquette: The Golden Eagles will be making their second straight trip to the NCAA Tournament and figure to earn perhaps a No. 2 seed.

SCOREBOARD

NBA

NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Central Division				
BUCKS	48	19	.716	—
Cleveland	43	27	.614	6 1/2
Chicago	31	36	.463	17
Indiana	31	38	.449	18
Detroit	16	53	.232	33
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	47	22	.681	—
Philadelphia	45	22	.672	1
Brooklyn	39	29	.574	7 1/2
New York	40	30	.571	7 1/2
Toronto	32	36	.471	14 1/2
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	37	33	.529	—
Atlanta	34	35	.493	2 1/2
Washington	31	37	.456	5
Orlando	28	40	.412	8
Charlotte	22	48	.314	15

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Southwest Division				
Memphis	41	26	.612	—
Dallas	34	35	.493	8
New Orleans 3	3	35	.485	8 1/2
San Antonio	17	50	.254	24
Houston	16	52	.235	25 1/2
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	46	22	.676	—
Minnesota	35	34	.507	11 1/2
Oklahoma City	33	35	.485	13
Utah	33	36	.478	13 1/2
Portland	31	37	.456	15
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Sacramento	40	26	.606	—
Phoenix	37	30	.552	3 1/2
L.A. Clippers	36	33	.525	5 1/2
Golden State	35	33	.515	6
L.A. Lakers	33	35	.485	8

Monday's Results

BUCKS at Sacramento, late
Detroit 117, Indiana 97
Memphis 104, Dallas 88
Miami 119, Utah 115
Minnesota 136, Atlanta 115
Houston 111, Boston 109
Phoenix at Golden State, late

Today's Games

BUCKS at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Cleveland at Charlotte, 6 p.m.
Detroit at Washington, 6 p.m.
Denver at Toronto, 6:30 p.m.
Brooklyn at Oklahoma City, 7 p.m.
L.A. Lakers at New Orleans, 7 p.m.
Orlando at San Antonio, 7 p.m.
New York at Portland, 9 p.m.

Wednesday's Games

Memphis at Miami, 6:30 p.m.
Philadelphia at Cleveland, 6:30 p.m.
Boston at Minnesota, 7 p.m.
L.A. Lakers at Houston, 7 p.m.
Sacramento at Chicago, 7 p.m.
Dallas at San Antonio, 8:30 p.m.
Golden State at L.A. Clippers, 8 p.m.

Thursday's Games

Indiana at **BUCKS**, 7 p.m.
Denver at Detroit, 6 p.m.
Oklahoma City at Toronto, 6:30 p.m.
Sacramento at Brooklyn, 6:30 p.m.
Orlando at Phoenix, 9 p.m.

On The Air

Television

TODAY
1 p.m. — 2023 BNP Paribas Open Tennis: ATP/WTA Round of 16. (WSN)
6 p.m. — 2023 NIT Basketball Tournament: First Round: Teams TBA. (ESPN2)
6 p.m. — NHL Hockey: Washington Capitals at New York Rangers. (ESPN)
6 p.m. — Big City Greens Classic: Washington Capitals at New York Rangers. (CBS)
8 p.m. — 2023 NIT Basketball Tournament: First Round: Teams TBA. (ESPN2)
8:30 p.m. — 2023 NIT Basketball Tournament: First Round: Teams TBA. (ESPN)
9 p.m. — NBA Basketball: Milwaukee Bucks at Phoenix Suns. (WSN)
10 p.m. — 2023 NIT Basketball Tournament: First Round: Teams TBA. (ESPN2)

WEDNESDAY
2:30 p.m. — Premier League Soccer: Southampton vs Brentford. (USA)
6 p.m. — 2023 NIT Basketball Tournament: First Round: Teams TBA. (ESPN2)
6 p.m. — NHL Hockey: Colorado Avalanche at Toronto Maple Leafs. (TNT)
6:30 p.m. — NBA Basketball: Philadelphia 76ers at Cleveland Cavaliers. (ESPN)
8 p.m. — 2023 NIT Basketball Tournament: First Round: Teams TBA. (ESPN2)
8:30 p.m. — MLB Preseason Baseball: Milwaukee Brewers at Arizona Diamondbacks. (WSN)
8:30 p.m. — NHL Hockey: Minnesota Wild at St. Louis Blues. (TNT)
9 p.m. — NBA Basketball: Golden State Warriors at Los Angeles Clippers. (ESPN)
10 p.m. — 2023 NIT Basketball Tournament: First Round: Teams TBA. (ESPN2)

Radio

TODAY
9 p.m. — NBA Basketball: Milwaukee Bucks at Phoenix Suns. (AM 620)

WEDNESDAY
8:30 p.m. — MLB Preseason Baseball: Milwaukee Brewers at Arizona Diamondbacks. (AM 620)

Deals

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League
BALTIMORE ORIOLLES: Optioned LHP Drew Rom to minor league camp.
BOSTON RED SOX: Optioned INF David Hamilton, INF/OF Ceddamne Rafaela and LHP Brandon Walter to Worcester (IL).
TAMPA BAY RAYS: Optioned SS Oslevis Basabe, Greg Jones, 2B Curtis Mead and RHPs Colby White and Taj Bradley to Durham (IL).
TORONTO BLUE JAYS: Reassigned LHPs Jimmy Burnette, Jimmy Robbins, Ricky Tiedman, RHPs Hayden Juenger, Sem Robberse, Hagen Danner, Yosver Zulueta, C Jamie Ritchie, OF Cam Eden, INFs Spencer Horwitz, Leonardo Jimenez, Orelvis Martinez to minor league spring training.

National League
COLORADO ROCKIES: Reassigned RHP T.J. Zeuch and C Willie MacIver to minor league camp.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS: Reassigned RHP R.J. Dabovich to minor league camp. Optioned LHP Sam Long.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
NBA: Fined Boston G Marcus Smart \$25,000 for initiating an on-court altercation and pulling G Trae Young to the floor during a game against Atlanta on Saturday, March 11.
DETROIT PISTONS: Signed F Eugene Omoruyi to a second 10-day contract.

MARCH MADNESS

Northern Kentucky ready for madness

Norse making first tourney appearance since 2019

By Gary B. Graves
AP Sports Writer

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Northern Kentucky coach Darrin Horn might be looking forward to his team's NCAA Tournament appearance even more than his players.

The Norse won their fourth Horizon League championship since 2016-17 but will play in March Madness for the first time since 2019. They also won the league title in 2020, but there was no NCAA Tournament that year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

That denied Horn a chance to lead his first NKU squad in the Big Dance, which makes this berth a bit more special. Especially after the Norse let an opportunity slip away in last year's Horizon Tournament.

"We kind of feel like we had one taken from us literally, where you qualify for the tournament and then the tournament just doesn't happen," Horn said in a phone interview. "So, to finally punch your ticket and know that there's going to be games and you're going to be a part of the process, that's really exciting."

The No. 16 seed Norse (22-12) will face Midwest top seed Houston on Thursday night in Birmingham, Alabama. NKU features the nation's No. 27 defense (63.6 points allowed per game) and the No. 42 scorer in junior guard Marques Warrick (19.1 points).

DEJA VU
Howard's last NCAA Tournament appearance in 1992 was a 100-67 loss to Midwest top seed Kansas. Back then, Kenneth Blakeney was a 20-year-old Duke sophomore on a Blue Devils squad that repeated as national champions.

Blakeney now coaches Howard and will lead the No. 16 seed Bison (22-12) against the defending national champion and top-seeded Jayhawks again, this time in a West Region first-round game. Howard topped Norfolk State 65-64 for the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Tournament championship, capping a remarkable turnaround from 4-29 in Blakeney's debut season in 2019-20 to their first regular-season and tournament titles since that last trip to the Big Dance.

"To represent Howard University is a big honor for me," said Blakeney, a Washington, D.C., native, via email. "I'm humble to be a mentor at a great university. Kansas is a national, traditional and historic program. I'm excited."

The D.C. school is one of two historically Black colleges and universities in the tournament. Texas Southern won the Southwestern Athletic Conference title and will face Fairleigh Dickinson in a matchup of No. 16 seeds in the First Four in Dayton, Ohio.

CHARMED EXISTENCE
It's been quite a year for West Virginia coach Bob Huggins.

Huggins was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in September. He became the winningest active Division I coach last week when Jim Boeheim retired at Syracuse.

The Mountaineers (19-14) overcame a horrible start to Big 12 play to reach the NCAA Tournament field as a No. 9 seed. They'll meet No. 8 seed and state line rival Maryland (21-12) on Thursday in Birmingham, Alabama.

"I never had any doubt that we wouldn't play in the tournament," Huggins said



Associated Press

Marquette's Tyler Kolek drives past Xavier's Desmond Claude in the second half of Saturday's Big East tournament championship game on Saturday in New York.

Sunday night. "I thought we were getting better and better."

West Virginia lost its first five Big 12 games but rebounded to finish 7-11 in arguably the nation's toughest league. The NCAA bid wouldn't have been secured without three wins in the Mountaineers' final four regular-season games, including over Iowa State and No. 12 Kansas State.

"I'm good with it," Huggins said. "Obviously we wanted to win more games. We just had some things

happen."

RECONNECTING

Marquette's first-round East Region matchup Friday against Vermont gave Golden Eagles guard and Big East player of the year Tyler Kolek a chance to catch up with an old friend.

Kolek began his college career at George Mason while playing for a coaching staff that included Bryson Johnson, who is now a Vermont assistant. As soon as the matchup of No. 2 and No. 15 seeds was announced, Kolek and John-

son began exchanging texts.

"We had some competitive fire going back and forth," Kolek said. "We'd always shoot against each other (at George Mason). He actually played at Bucknell and he was a pretty good player. Just a little trash talk."

Marquette beat Xavier 65-51 on Saturday to earn its first Big East Conference title.

STAYING HOME

No. 1 overall seed Alabama and archrival Auburn, the Midwest No. 9 seed, won't have to go far for their

tournament debuts.

Both schools will open in Birmingham, Alabama, a 58-mile hop from Tuscaloosa for the Crimson Tide, who on Thursday will face the winner of the No. 16 seed matchup between Texas A&M-Corpus Christi and Southeast Missouri State.

The Tigers will travel about 110 miles for their first-round meeting with No. 8 seed Iowa, where Auburn coach Bruce Pearl was an assistant from 1986-92.



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum senior forward Madi Dogs shoots against Milwaukee Academy of Science sophomore guard Jaeda Turner during the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at the Resch Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum senior forward Morgan Adams drives against Milwaukee Academy of Science sophomore forward Ellis Williams during the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at the Resch Center.

Kewaskum

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mustering just four points in a state-semifinal win over West Salem.

“I was more frustrated personally with myself,” Steger said of her performance Thursday. “I think some anger from (Thursday’s) game with myself really helped me want to push myself to be better today. And I think just the fact it was the state championship, there was something inside me knowing that it’s my last game. I just found something in me and it just kept me going.”

There were multiple times when it looked like the Indians (24-5) were going to run away with it, only for the Novas (23-4) to claw their way back.

That included 17 seconds into the second half when senior forward Morgan Adams made a fast-break layup to make it 34-23 in favor of Kewaskum, who led 32-23 at the break. But MAS, who only led for just over a minute in the first half, switched to a diamond press defensively to speed up the methodical Indians.

“Second half we obviously made some more adjustments, but that first half was probably one of the worst halves we’ve had all season,” MAS coach Giovanni Riley said.

“We’ve been in that position before. We’re a second-half team.”

Kewaskum had just four turnovers in the first half but coughed it up five times within the first four minutes of the second stanza. Suddenly, its 11-point lead had evaporated, as senior guard Lalani Ellis scored off a turnover to give the Novas a 35-34 lead with 14 minutes, 2 seconds remaining.

“I thought we had given it away,” Maley said.

But out of a timeout, the Indians responded with an 11-0 spurt of their own, as Steger scored four straight and Dogs four more before a free throw and layup off her own second missed free throw by Steger made it 45-35 with just over 11 minutes left.

Again, however, MAS wouldn’t roll over. It wrestled the lead back with 4:30 to play when Ellis made a free throw to make it 48-47, and the Novas would have multiple opportunities to build on it as they went into a stall and neither team scored over the next 2 1/2 minutes.

But Dogs, who finished with 13 points and nine boards, eventually

I think some anger from (Thursday’s) game with myself really helped me want to push myself to be better today. And I think just the fact it was the state championship, there was something inside me knowing that it’s my last game. I just found something in me and it just kept me going.

— Julia Steger, Kewaskum girls basketball senior guard

pried the ball away and got it up to Steger, who was fouled and put the Indians ahead for good at the free-throw line with 1:54 on the clock. That began a 7-0 run, as Steger made another from the charity stripe with 37 seconds remaining to push the lead to 54-48.

Still, MAS wasn’t done.

Senior guard Beautiful Waheed got a 3 to fall on the other end, and then Kewaskum threw away the inbound pass. But senior guard Desharia Williams was off the mark from distance, and Adams (11 points) went 1 of 2 from the line

with six seconds left to seal the championship.

Dog pile initiated.

“Our whole team was joking about doing the pile,” Dogs said. “After our first game one of our teammates actually threw herself on the floor and expected us to jump on her. But to be able to celebrate with my team and my best friends like that, it’s just so special and it was way better than I ever could have imagined.”

It was a season straight out of a movie for Maley and Kewaskum.

The 70-year-old took over just a few weeks before the season began for Russell Thull, and it was tough sledding at first.

“We knew that he was our coach and whether we liked it or not, we had to accept that,” Dogs said. “I feel like the more and more we spent time with him at practice, every day, games, we just got used to him and started to understand what he wanted from us.”

Steger also admitted it was difficult to adjust to Maley’s ways after spending years in the same system dating back to middle school.

“But when we finally started accepting the new things, everything just started clicking really well,” Steger said.

Maley said following

Kewaskum’s victory in the state semifinal that after some hesitation, he was grateful his daughters convinced him to get back into coaching after spending over a decade at West Bend and then several more years over at Cardinal Stritch.

“I told them they were nuts,” Maley said. “I knew of the previous coach and I knew he was excellent. When I took over I said to the parents this is Russ Thull’s team and I’m just a consultant for a year. The idea of this all happening, it took a unique set of circumstances.”

He also said he knew the Indians weren’t going to blow out Milwaukee Academy of Science on Saturday, and while it came down to the wire as Maley anticipated, Kewaskum was celebrating with the gold ball moments after securing its first state championship in its first trip to state in 41 years.

“The second half they made a nice comeback,” Maley said. “But we steadied ourselves and we’ve done that all season. We probably pulled the ball out too soon, but in a lot of games this year when we got up, even though statistically we weren’t great free-throw shooters, we seem to know how to make them when it counted.”



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum senior guard Julia Steger tries to score against Milwaukee Academy of Science senior guard Lalani Ellis during the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at Resch Center.



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Kewaskum senior forward Madi Dogs celebrates after scoring and drawing a foul during the WIAA Division 3 state championship Saturday at the Resch Center.