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## Panthers' progress

### Center Line girls hoops realizes potential, relies on seniors for turnaround

By Sue Teggart  
 C & G Sports Writer

CENTER LINE — Three days before the Center Line girls basketball team's last game, coach Trevor Warczinsky couldn't help but smile when asked about his Panthers and their progress.

For a squad that finished 4-6 in the Macomb Area Conference Bronze Division last year, being in contention for a league title — the Panthers were tied at press time with Warren Mott — heading into the final game of the regular season and posting an 8-1 league record, 13-6 overall, is a great accomplishment.

"At the beginning of the year, we talked about creating some goals that we wanted to accomplish," Warczinsky said. "We wanted to be the team that turned this program around, that started that ball rolling in a positive direction.

"It always starts with winning, and we've been able to translate a lot of that hard work ... into some wins."

Warczinsky said putting together a solid season was easy, thanks to a total team effort.

"It was easy to do with this group of kids," Warczinsky said. "They were really willing to listen. All of them are very coachable kids."

"I've had three different coaches since I've been playing, and we haven't had a winning season until this year," senior Stephanie Lee said. "It's just exciting, because Center Line has never had a winning season."

Warczinsky said the key to the Panthers' success starts with high-intensity practices, which lead to 32 minutes of solid basketball.

"The kids really bought into the defensive system that we emphasized from day one," Warczinsky said. "It's nice to see some benefits paying off for them, because they worked really hard to get here."

By putting constant pressure on the basketball, the Panthers have allowed just 36.8 points per game — the lowest in their division.

"With the exception of just a couple of games, we've been able to hold some good teams to an average of 36 points a game," Warczinsky said. "We've really come together."

Seniors Lee and Thelmeka Perry are the foundation of the squad.



Photo by Tracy Dreslinski  
 Center Line senior Ashley Marlow dribbles the ball upcourt during a game earlier in the season. At press time, the Panthers were 8-1 — a turnaround from last season's 4-6 league finish — and competing for a MAC Bronze title.

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“The coaches have been inconsistent, but they have been a constant through this program,” Warczinsky said regarding Lee and Perry having to adjust to three different coaches. “I’ve really looked to them to hold everything together, and they’ve done a wonderful job leading in a positive way.”

Led by Lee, Perry and senior Amber VanDoorne, the Panthers have also had a balanced scoring attack to go along with their tenacious defense.

“Amber VanDoorne has really stepped up for us as a leader on and off the court,” Warczinsky said. “Stephanie (Lee) is averaging 15 points per game, but she’s doing so much more than that.”

Warczinsky said although Lee’s stats may not be as impressive as in previous seasons, her value is immeasurable.

“(Lee) is playing phenomenal defense and distributing the ball to her teammates to get them scoring chances,” he said. “She’s really been unselfish, which I think has been a key to our success — her willingness to get everyone involved and do the little things that don’t show up in the stats is key. She’s definitely been our most valuable player on the court.”

“I try and be a leader as much as I can, and come out and work hard every single day at practice,” Lee said.

At press time, Center Line had just one game left to play — a Feb. 27 contest against New Haven High — while Warren Mott had its last game against Madison Heights Lamphere Feb. 26.

For both programs, it all came down to this final game to decide the league championship.

Regardless of how the season ended for Center Line, Warczinsky said he’s proud to see the Panthers’ progress.

“I’m extremely proud of these kids,” Warczinsky said Feb. 24. “They all want to win, but more importantly, they all understand what it takes to get there. They’ve all been willing to put the team first.”

The Panthers played their opening-round district game against Warren Fitzgerald March 1, after press time. The winner of that game plays Detroit Pershing at 7:30 p.m. March 3 at Fitzgerald. The district final is scheduled for 6 p.m. March 5, also at Fitzgerald.

*You can reach Sports Writer Sue Teggart at [steggart@candgnews.com](mailto:steggart@candgnews.com) or at (586) 279-1107.*



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