

Casey sinks Lady Admirals, advance to finals

By Derek Brightwell
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All year long, Danville coach Judie Mason has said that while her team lacks a superstar like she had last year, her team is really good when they play as a unit.

It's what led the Admirals to 22 wins and the 12th Region semifinals on Friday night. But they ran into one of the few teams that can match their depth and happened to have a couple of stars to lean on as well.

Specifically, they had point guard and 12th Region Player of the Year Lauren Lee.

"When you have a point guard, coaches are so much better. You just tell them to go get the ball and take over," Mason said. "When we start trying to play catch up, Lauren Lee's going to pick us apart. She did tonight and that's why I voted for her for player of the region. That's why I think she'll take them — if they play the way they did tonight, they're winning the region."

Lee finished with a game high 18 points, with five rebounds, four assists and a blocked shot as well. She only missed three of her eight shot attempts and knocked down all six free throws while the Casey student section chanted "MVP".

"She just works her butt off all the time. That's why she's the region's player of the year," Casey coach Tara Weddle said. "It doesn't matter if it's offense, defense, scoring or not, she's going to go hard. It doesn't matter if she's in at the end of the game with the younger kids. She's going to fight for every rebound and go for steals. She's a workhorse."

Danville held the lead for the first 3:40 of the game before Casey pulled ahead and never looked back.

"I called a timeout in the first quarter because we were playing — we talked about it all week, no matter who we played we had to attack the rim — and I felt we started the game just passing the ball around," Weddle said about the start of the game. "We have to drive and kick the ball and make the defense move."

After that, it was all Casey County. And as the Rebels started to find their groove, the Ads suddenly fell back into old problems from the beginning of the year.

"We made us look bad. We missed layups and free throws," Mason said. "We got the shots — we missed



Lady Rebel Lauren Lee and 12th Region Player of the Year goes strong to the basket against Lady Admiral defenders Ahyana Burnett (20) and Tyliah Bradshaw (12) in Casey's win Friday night.

23 shots in the paint in the first half and you're not going to win that way. I don't think it was anything they were doing because we were getting the shots."

And as the game slowly started to get away from Danville, the lack of a superstar — the thing that has made them so tough to defend all year — suddenly became a liability.

"We were rushing, but when Cam's 1-7 and Lara's 2-11, we're not going to win," Mason said. "I thought we got the shots we wanted but we didn't have that senior to take control. We didn't have that go-to person to settle us down.

"We've said all year we didn't have that one who could take over but we're good as a team. Tonight we just felt out of sync," she added. "I don't know if it was us being afraid — but I think we played scared tonight. That's not normal for us because we didn't play that way in the All-A. Once we turned the ball over a bunch, we didn't have that one person that can

take over."

Mason is hoping that her team next year can be what this year's Casey team was. The Rebels finished as the region runners-up two years in a row coming into this season and last year's team had no seniors but a deep and loaded junior class — just like this year's Danville team.

"We don't have any seniors on this team so if we learn from this game, like in life — I coach basketball like I live my life, we're going to have good times and bad times," Mason said. "It's about how you react to the bad times and we've got to react to this. We've got to learn from this and get better from this."

For Casey — they're back to the championship knowing that this is their last chance to get over that hump.

"We went in there and I told them 'It's year three in a row,' and there's seven seniors in there tonight so it's up to them if they want a different outcome," Wed-