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**By CHRIS YEARICK**

• *Leader & Times*



LARNED — The Southwestern Heights Lady Mustangs took to the floor on Saturday night in the 3A finals of sub-state play, but they could not overcome the three-point tenacity of the Thomas Moore Prep Lady Monarchs, who stole the victory, 46-43.

Even though the intense Monarch defense came on strong, the offensive board play by Mustang senior Deni Jacobs and junior Sheree Ryan gave Southwestern Heights an early 6-1 lead at 5:22 in the first. TMP's coach felt the pressure and Mustang momentum and called a timeout to regroup the Monarchs.

They came back in the quarter with a quest to dominate. The Monarchs drove to the basket, put in successful free throws to tie up the match at 10 with 52 seconds remaining. Senior Mustang Heidi Brown gave the Mustangs the advantage with a quarter-saving three pointer to lead 13-10.

"We had a good start, played well early," head coach Barry Mellen said.

The TMP Monarchs couldn't take advantage of their steals at the beginning of the second quarter, and the game stayed neck and neck. They were able to tie up the competition 17-17 with 4:17 to play.

"That's when some things fell apart for us," Mellen said. "We had six straight turnovers and four of those led to direct layups."

The Monarchs were then able to take the lead away from the Lady Mustangs threatening Coach Barry Mellen to call time out. The Lady Mustang defense seemed lackluster allowing TMP to take a significant halftime 27-19 lead.

In the third, the Lady Mustangs came out firing hard from the inside but had trouble getting the bucket to fall. With few scores falling for the Mustangs, TMP increased their advantage 35-23 at 3:54.

Mustang junior Rebi Jacobs stepped up for the Lady Mustangs to land a three pointer, and junior Whitney Garinger benefited from a couple of free throws and a three pointer to close the TMP lead to 38-32 at the end of the third.

The focus of the Monarchs in the fourth was to wear down the clock. The Lady Mustangs pressed turned on to close the gap.

The Mustangs outscored the Monarchs 11-8 to battle back 44-43 with 14.4 seconds left in regulation.

The Mustangs faltered and the buzzer sounded defeat of 46-43 for the Southwestern Heights Lady Mustangs.

Heidi Brown led Heights with 14 points, Sheree Ryan added 10, Deni Jacobs and Whitney Garinger seven each, and Rebi Jacobs five.

The Lady Mustangs finish the season at 17-4 overall.

"We lose three great seniors," Mellen said. "There's a good group of juniors and underclassmen that will want to play (next year)."

• *SHAWN YORKS contributed to this report.*

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