

## Gothenburg girls one win away from state

Written by Deb Egenberger

Wednesday, 20 February 2013 19:47 -

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### C1-11 champs face Chadron Friday

LEXINGTON—Early season struggles seem to have faded away now that the Gothenburg girls have won 12 of their last 14 games, including a pair at the C1-11 sub-district in Lexington last week.

Lessons from losses to those Class B teams and other state-rated opponents before the holiday break haven't been forgotten by the Swedes, though.

They are fuel for what hopefully lies ahead.

"I think the girls can now see the benefit of a tough schedule," said Swede coach Chris Lecher. "With the exception of a couple of games, we battled with those state-ranked teams. The girls knew we could compete."

Fighting through that rough part of the season early has paid off with a Southwest Conference championship, a sub-district title and a heap of confidence.

"I just hope it pays off one more time," the coach said.

Gothenburg defeated Chase County 45-23 in the opening round of the C1-11 sub-district on Feb. 12 and cruised to a title with a 45-27 victory over Ogallala in the final.

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With the pair of wins, Gothenburg (15-10) advances to the C1-6 district final against Chadron (21-2) on Friday in Sidney.

“The girls’ mood is good and their confidence is high,” Lecher said. “When you’ve got those two things going on with high school girls, good things are going to happen.”

It’s been nine years since the Swede girls have played in a district title game for a chance to compete at state.

In 2004, Gothenburg defeated Gordon 61-54 at Sidney to win the C1-6 district and advance to state.

Lecher knows the Swedes are underdogs this time around, facing the No. 1 ranked team in Class C-1, but that doesn’t mean he and his girls have any less conviction.

“They’re going to press us like crazy and they want to force turnovers,” Lecher said. “They’re like pitbulls.”

But Gothenburg isn’t afraid of the pressure. The girls have seen it all year long and are prepared.



“We’ve worked all year on breaking the press,” the coach said. “Not a day goes by that we don’t work on it in practice. The thing is, these girls believe they can break it and if we can force them

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out of the press, that will be half the battle.”

The Swedes have also been working on ways to handle Chadron’s 2-3 zone defense, anticipating a district final matchup with the Cardinals.

“I don’t think Chadron is used to our physical style of play and I think we can disrupt them,” Lecher said. “It’s just a matter of taking care of business.”

The Swedes will take on the Cardinals at 7 p.m. MT in the Cabela’s Athletic Facility at Sidney High School.

The winner automatically advances to the Class C-1 state tournament in Lincoln next week.

Should the Swedes upset the Cardinals, Chadron is still likely to get a state berth as the top team in the class on the Nebraska School Activities Association’s wild card points list.

Longhorns pose

little challenge

Gothenburg’s girls opened the C1-11 sub-district with a 17-0 run against Chase County and allowed the Longhorns little breathing room the entire game en route to a 45-23 victory.

Chase County didn’t get on the scoreboard until less than 20 seconds to play in the first period.

The quarter ended with a 17-3 Swede advantage.

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“It wasn’t much of a challenge and I was hoping it wouldn’t turn into one,” Lecher said.

Gothenburg kept the hammer down and pushed to a 27-11 lead at halftime, never allowing the Longhorns to gain hope.

Senior guard Brittyn Munster had a game-high 17 points, including three three-pointers, to lead the Swedes.

Chase County finishes the season with a 7-18 record.

Three-for-three

against Ogallala

Regardless of record, it can be difficult to beat an opponent three times in one season.

Lecher knew that going into the sub-district final against Ogallala and it made him a little nervous.

A little prank by his players before they got on the bus made him even more nervous.



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“Early in the season, I felt like my No. 1 job was to keep things fun,” Lecher said, recalling Gothenburg’s eight losses in the first 11 games. “Now, the girls pretty much take care of that for me.”

As they prepared to leave for Thursday’s game in Lexington, junior Aryn Meisinger told Lecher teammate Regan Geiken would be a little late for the bus because she twisted her ankle during school.

“I was instantly making a new game plan,” Lecher said. “And then here comes Regan bee-bopping along. They had me going.”

The joke helped keep the mood light for the Swedes as they flew past Ogallala 45-27.

Gothenburg led the Indians 9-2 in the first quarter as Ogallala struggled to make a basket.

Ogallala’s first field goal came with 1:13 left in the first quarter and the Swedes finished the period with an 11-6 advantage.

Gothenburg kept the defensive intensity up in the second period, allowing only three Ogallala points as the Swedes carried a 21-9 lead into halftime.

The victory, Lecher said, was never in question.

Munster was again the leading scorer with 17 points and Geiken added 12 points.