

SWC champs!

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 31 January 2013 14:17 -



Two upsets lead Swede girls to conference crown

The last time the Gothenburg girls captured a Southwest Conference title, the three seniors on the Swede team were fourth-graders learning about Nebraska history, not perfecting a press break.

That was January 2005 and Gothenburg defeated Minden in the semi-finals that year for a chance to retain the SWC tournament crown with a win over Broken Bow in the championship.

Fast forward eight years past seven consecutive titles for Minden.

“Until now, the only sport this group of girls has won a conference title in is track,” said Swede girls basketball coach Chris Lecher.

But an overtime upset over Class C-1’s top-ranked Minden in the semi-finals on Thursday, followed by a convincing win over Ainsworth Saturday afternoon returned the SWC tournament title to the Swedes.

“I’m really happy for these girls,” Lecher said, “and very proud of my team.”

Gothenburg improves to 11-8 on the season with a winning streak extended to eight games.

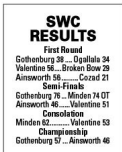
Swedes win in overtime

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Some teams might feel intimidated by a No. 1 state ranking and only a pair of losses to higher-class opponents.



SWC RESULTS

First Round
Gothenburg 38 ... DePahlis 34
Valentine 56 ... Broken Bow 29
Ainsworth 68 ... Central 21

Semi-Finals
Gothenburg 78 ... Minden 74 OT
Ainsworth 48 ... Valentine 51

Consolation
Minden 62 ... Valentine 53

Championship
Gothenburg 57 ... Ainsworth 46

That was not the case when Gothenburg stepped on Minden's home court during the semi-finals of the SWC tournament Thursday night.

"The girls were never intimidated and they never panicked," Lecher said. "They just went out and played the game and had fun."

Of course winning is always fun.

Gothenburg jumped out on the Whippets 6-1 to start the game and just kept building momentum throughout.

"We decided to go right at them instead of letting them attack us," Lecher said. "We never let them get up on us six or eight points."

The Swedes led 14-12 at the end of the first quarter and trailed 32-31 at halftime.

Minden junior Brooke Kissinger kept the Whippets in the game with her perimeter shooting.

"Every time we thought we'd get a gap, she closed it," Lecher said. "We just couldn't pull away."

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Gothenburg was up 59-56 heading into the fourth quarter and the score stayed tight the whole way.

The Swedes led 68-65 when Kissinger hit a three-pointer to tie with 12 seconds left.

“I was thinking about calling a timeout,” Lecher said, “but I didn’t want to risk a turnover at that point.”

Swede senior Taylor Wolf had a shot for the win but it rolled off the rim.

In overtime, Lecher said it looked like Gothenburg vs. Kissinger. She scored all six of their points in the extra period on a pair of three-pointers.



“She had a shot at the buzzer from three or four feet behind the three-point line with a couple of our girls in her face,” Lecher said. “Thankfully it fell just a little to the left. It would not have been good to have played so well and so hard and then lost on a last-second shot.”

Kissinger finished with eight three-point buckets and 36 points total.

Four Swedes scored in double figures. Regan Geiken and Jacey Wiggins led the way with 19 points each, followed by Brittyn Munster with 17 and Wolf adding 12.

Title never in question

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Gothenburg started the SWC championship game on Saturday against Ainsworth with a bang, making the first four field goal attempts and a free throw for good measure.

The girls set the tone early and kept the Bulldogs at bay en route to a 57-46 title victory.

"I was glad to see the girls just keep pouring it on," Lecher said. "Even when Ainsworth made a couple of pushes back into the game, we never let up."

The Swedes led 20-6 at the end of the first quarter, keeping Ainsworth's star, Ellie Carr, in check.

Even when the Bulldogs made a 7-0 run to start the second period, Lecher didn't worry.

"I could see that we were getting a little draggy," he said. "No doubt they were tired after the way they played Minden but we couldn't afford to let up."

Gothenburg went to the locker room at halftime with a 28-22 advantage and a little foul trouble.

"We knew Ainsworth was not going to be afraid to foul," Lecher said. "We like to play physical too. Sometimes, that can come back to bite you though."

Within a minute of play in the third quarter, two Swede starters were on the bench in foul trouble.

Ainsworth cut Gothenburg's lead to four points twice in the last eight minutes but there was still no panic in the Swedes as they pushed to the end.

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Munster was the high scorer for Gothenburg with 20 points and Wolf added 15.

The Swedes will get an opportunity to prove their win over Minden was not a fluke this weekend.

After hosting Valentine (9-7) on Friday, the Swedes travel to Minden on Saturday.

“We’re on a roll at the right time of year,” Lecher said. “I hope we can maintain a little of the swagger we’ve got. Minden is no doubt going to be gunning for us. That’s OK, though. These girls aren’t going to be intimidated.”

Tipoff Friday is set for 5:30 p.m. with a 4:30 p.m. start time at Minden Saturday.