Gothenburg ends post-season run with C1-6 loss to Kimball

After a turbulent ride through the regular season, Gothenburg's boys basketball team put together its best performances of the year during post season action.

It was a good time to peak, said coach Roger Koehler, providing some excitement for a team that saw its share of ups and downs.

Although nerves were visible in the first couple of minutes of the opening round of the C1-11 sub-district at Lexington last week, the Swedes settled down for a 50-40 victory over Chase County.

Then two nights later, Gothenburg took a focused attitude into the sub-district final.

The Swedes played what Koehler believes to be their most complete game of the year against Cozad, in a game that came down to free throws in the final minute.

Gothenburg beat the Haymakers 52-49 to advance to the C1-6 district final Monday night in Grant.

"We were one of 12 teams in Class C-1 still playing," Koehler said. "The kids battled hard. They went out with 100% effort."

But district opponent Kimball, with a shiny 19-1 record coming in, went 8-of-10 from the line in the last minute and a half of the game to pull out a 51-40 victory and advance to the state tournament next week.

Gothenburg ended the season 9-14.

“It’s not the way we wanted it to end,” the coach said, “but these kids have nothing to hang their heads about. They were definitely playing their best ball at the end of the year. As a coach, that’s the way you want it.”

Swede size causes

trouble for Longhorns

Gothenburg seemed a little tentative in the first round of the C1-11 sub-district on Feb. 19 but the nerves wore off midway through the first quarter.

“We didn’t take care of the ball on two of the first four trips down the floor,” Koehler said.

After allowing the Longhorns a 5-2 advantage in the first four minutes of the game, Gothenburg turned the tables.

The Swedes finished the first half shooting 77% from the field and they were 63% for the game.

“When you make that kind of field goal percentage, chances are pretty good that you’re going to win,” the coach said.

Gothenburg turned a 10-8 first-quarter deficit into a 21-19 lead at halftime and never trailed again.

Koehler said the Swedes’ size caused problems for Chase County both offensively and defensively.

Gothenburg’s 6-foot-7 and 6-foot-8 post players led the way to the win.

Senior Logan Koehler had 15 points and nine rebounds while sophomore Tanner Borchardt offered 12 points and six rebounds with a school-record-tying eight blocked shots.

Gothenburg focused but

not tight against Cozad

The rivalry between Gothenburg and Cozad played out in classic fashion Thursday night during the sub-district final in Lexington.

It was nip and tuck the whole way until Swede senior Logan Koehler hit four free throws in the final 12 seconds of the game to solidify the 52-49 victory over the Haymakers.

“I could tell the guys were focused but not tight,” the coach said. “They were locked in on what they needed to do and they got the job done.”

After trailing 13-12 at the end of the first period, Gothenburg pulled ahead of Cozad 26-22 at halftime, scoring the last eight points of the second quarter.

“I think that set the tone going into the second half,” Koehler said.

Then the Swedes extended a 1-3-1 zone defense in the second half with the long arms of Aaron Collins, Tanner Borchardt and Logan Koehler across the middle.

“I don’t think Cozad expected that,” the coach said. “Those three kids combined have an extremely long wing span.”

But Cozad didn’t go away, hitting a handful of key three-pointers in the second half to keep it interesting.

Up 48-46 with 20 seconds to play, Logan Koehler was fouled and sank a pair of free throws to extend the lead to four points.

A long three-pointer by Cozad’s Jacob Rush on the next possession closed the gap with 6.5 seconds left until the Haymakers sent Koehler to the line again.

The senior made both attempts, despite a Cozad timeout in between in an attempt to ice him.

Borchardt was the leading scorer for Gothenburg with 17 points while Koehler managed a

triple-double: 13 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists.

First district final since

2005-06 season

By winning the sub-district, Gothenburg made its way into the first district final game since the 2005-06 season when the Swedes made it to the Class C-1 state tournament.

The Swedes knew Kimball, with only one loss on the year, would be a tall order but their coach was confident.

“I though going in we would match up with them well,” Koehler said. “But they were much quicker as a team than I anticipated and they played more physical than they showed on film.”

Still, he said, the Longhorns were a team he thought they could beat.

The first quarter was back and forth scoring as Kimball took a 17-12 lead until Logan Koehler slammed home a dunk at the buzzer to close it to 17-14 Kimball.

Gothenburg carried momentum from the dunk into the second period, taking the lead with 5:12 on the clock with a jumper by Blake Ristine.

A two-minute dry spell for the Swedes that included three consecutive turnovers allowed the Longhorns to get back on top, where they stayed for the remainder of the game.

Gothenburg trailed 31-23 at halftime despite a layup at the buzzer by Tanner Borchardt.

“We knew Kimball wanted to play a fast-paced game,” Koehler said. “We fell into their style in the first half and we knew we needed to control the tempo to start the third quarter.”

Gothenburg managed to slow things down, the coach said, maybe a little too much.

Logan Koehler hit a shot at the 6:30 mark of the third period and the Swedes didn’t score again until he banked another one with just over a minute to go in the quarter.

“We saw a little of the things that plagued us all season,” the coach said. “Those mental lapses will kill you.”

Down 37-27 to start the fourth quarter, Gothenburg couldn’t chip into that lead much and was forced to foul to stop the clock in the final two minutes.

Koehler was high scorer in his last high school game with 17 points. He also had 11 rebounds and five assists.

Borchardt contributed 10 points and 12 rebounds.

“The kids never gave up,” the coach said. “I even told them that a lot of lesser men would have given up on the season when our record was 6-11. It’s a life lesson. That’s what it’s really all about.