

# GI drops heartbreaker; Sherman falls hard

BY: Mary Jo Monnin / News Sports Reporter

While a layup with 3.2 seconds ultimately doomed Grand Island, it was an inbound play with 18.7 seconds left that had them kicking themselves following a 39-37 loss to Pittsford Mendon.

The Class A Far West Regional girls basketball game was played before an estimated 400 at the Buffalo State Sports Arena.

The Vikings had the ball on their own baseline with 18.7 ticks left in a tie game and nearly lost possession when the player inbound the ball stepped over the line. Instead, GI called a timeout just in the nick of time. On its second attempt to inbound the ball, GI was called for an illegal pick, and the ball went the other way.

Pittsford Mendon brought the ball up, and in a well-designed play, eventually found Kristin Powers under the boards for a layup and the dramatic win.

"All we were trying to do is get the ball inbounds, use the clock, and then call another time out, and then run a play at the end. That's what our goal was," said GI coach Jenepher Banker. "But we never got the ball inbounds."

The losses don't come any tougher for Grand Island senior Cassie Oursler, who had 22 points — including 13 of her team's 20 points in the first half, with 14 rebounds.

"We'd been working for days upon days on how to push her away from the basket without getting called for a foul," said Pittsford Mendon senior Anna Valentine, who finished with a team-high 10 points.

Most of Oursler's points came on a running hook shot she's developed out of necessity, which almost always goes in off the glass.

"I don't know, I just do whatever I need to do to get around the defense. I just look at the basket and hope it goes in," said Oursler, who will play at Robert Morris. Oursler had 138 points in five postseason games (27.6 ppg.)

The game was a rematch from the 2011 Regional won by Grand Island, 50-46. Instead of GI going back to states, Pittsford Mendon (21-1) advanced to the New York State final four at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy. Mendon plays on Friday at 3:15 p.m. against the winner of X-Massena and II-Troy. Pittsford Mendon's only loss of the season was by 75-36 to eventual Class AA champion Gates Chili on Jan. 5.

Kassie Bennett added nine points for Grand Island, which ended its season, 13-9. Pittsford Mendon's Lauren D'Hont, a 5-foot-11 senior guard and Canisius College signee, finished with eight points.

The game was fast-paced from the start. The first quarter ended 11-10 in favor of the visitors. Oursler got her first field goal of the game with 2:31 left in the first quarter. GI was slowed by six turnovers against Mendon's full-court press. The second quarter was equally close, with Mendon scoring seven of the last 10 points to take a 24-20 lead into the locker room.

The game was tied three times in the third quarter before Valentine scored with 25 seconds left to give her team a 30-28 lead after three. That set the tone for a wild fourth quarter that came down to the final possession.