

## 2012 Girls' Modified Basketball Season a Rewarding Success

The 2012 Girls' Modified Basketball season was looking a bit "dodgy" after the first four games – they were one win and three losses and couldn't seem to get their footing. Although the losses were close games, they couldn't find their rhythm. There were only three returning players from the previous season, all forwards, and everyone else was new to league basketball. Finally, though, things clicked. A move to guard for one of the returners, more familiarity with each other, and some confidence from solid play led to a strong finish (nine wins and one loss in overtime) to give the girls a very respectable 10-4 campaign.

Seven seventh graders made up the squad and they provide a promising outlook for the 2013 season. Hayley Latvala will be the only returning forward next year, but she'll certainly be well prepared after her playing time this season. Hayley was often on the court in the waning minutes of the fourth quarter – her athleticism and sense for where the play was going (defensively) helped keep opposing squads from comebacks. She diligently works to improve her game during practice. The rest of grade seven was composed of guards. Two solid performers were Sarah Wellence and Juleeann Nyitrai. Unfortunately, Sarah's arm injury cut short a season that was showing a good amount of growth. Juleeann, though, was able to find her niche as a bit of a shooting guard, spotting up for a number of quality jumpers. Maddie Webb also showed tremendous promise as she posted quite a bit of playing time and had only two fouls called against her the entire season – solid, controlled play. Two workhorses were Megan Frisch and Gracie McNamara. Both players averaged about 14 minutes per game and scored some, but their real asset was defense. They could both "mark" players well – they were a couple of cheap suits in a rainstorm. They were always on the floor in the last minutes of the game, using their speed and agility to harass opposing players into turnovers and mistakes. And our final seventh grader was Assistant Captain MaryElisabeth Rustowicz was an excellent organizer, a hard worker, and had the highest free throw percentage on the team. She is a wonderful teammate who continually carries a positive demeanor which eventually spread throughout the entire squad.

Eighth graders were comprised of three "freshmen" and three veterans. They will all be a big help to the program as they move onto the high school next year. Taylor Vanderzell was a newcomer that showed a great deal of promise. Taylor worked hard every practice trying to learn the intricacies of our offense. Tiffany Melendez was a pleasant surprise that quickly figured out her role as a rebounder and "putback" specialist. She was a force inside for any

unsuspecting guard who might try to drive the lane. Shelby Ishmael was ready to be a big addition to the squad until she too, like Wellence, suffered a season-ending injury. Shelby was a force in the five games she appeared and opposing teams were lucky not to have her in the line-up for the remainder of the season. Sammi Johnson was one of three returning seventh graders. Sammi played whistle to whistle, not giving an inch to the other team. Sammi was a determined player; she wanted to be on the court to help her team at all times. Kali Hausrath was in another world this year. Kali placed herself among the elite this season, becoming the third all-time leading scorer (season) by putting in 122 points (one of only nine Viking Centurions over the past 18 seasons). The record (which has been standing since 2003) is held by a *relative* of Kali's – the 133 of Andrea Monaco. Kali's points were over 1/3 of the team's total on the year. Kali rebounded, played tenacious "D", and used her soft hands to score almost at will. She was the classic "lead by example" leader and we should expect nothing but great things from her in the high school. And, finally, there is Captain Shannon Holt. Shannon sacrificed a Hausrath-like season as a forward to help the team out by switching to the guard position. With injuries and so many new players, Shannon's veteran leadership gave the team confidence when things weren't going well and kept the team calm when the opposition might have started a small run. She ran the offense very well and created chemistry among a group of individuals with diverse interests and needs. Shannon never lost faith and took a 1 and 3 team to 10 and 4 finish with no regulation losses in the final 10 games. Shannon is certainly another one to watch as she enters the high school.

Thank you to all of the fans who came out to support the team. A special thanks to scorekeeper Arthur J. Meaney IV, without whose pencil prowess the statistics would have been not nearly as accurate.