

What a great week!

Many thanks to the girl's basketball program for providing us with a week of fun, memories, and pride.

It seemed like most of you were at Stevens Point and Chippewa Falls while the Lady Panthers basketball team competed in the Sectional Tournament. With the band playing, the crowd cheering, and the players performing to their best, the atmosphere was what high school athletics is meant to be. The pride that was on display from the team, their coaches, the student body and the community was fantastic. To top it off, the ladies win the sectional and head down to Madison for the State Tournament.

Tickets had to be sold, transportation for the players, the band, and the fans, had to be arranged. Motel reservations needed to be made for the players, along with the scheduling of practices, meals, and meetings. New 'State' shirts needed to be sold, banners painted, and a send-off pep rally organized. Busy time for everyone, but it was sure worth it.

One of the major initiatives we took on a few years ago was our sportsmanship at athletic events. With the help of Nancy Flanagan organizing the pep club to be a positive influence at games, to willing, motivated students to embrace the philosophy, our student cheering section was the best of all the schools at the sectionals and at state. In fact, during the Division 4 championship game, when the Potosi cheering section lacked cheerleaders or organized cheers, our students took it upon themselves to help initiate cheers. This came to the delight and appreciation of the adult Potosi fans who cheered our students on, and the respect of WIAA officials. When I talked with those WIAA workers, along with a couple of the coaches at the tournament, they immediately stated what a wonderful fan base we have. One official even mentioned to Mr. Clouse, that our students were the best group to work with.

This wasn't just about the students either. The adults who attended the games were very vocal and supportive of the team, and did it all in a very positive manner. This gives a very favorable impression of the Durand community to the rest of the state. Like it or not, most of what people think about a town is based on what they observe during an athletic event. To the communities of Stevens Point, Chippewa Falls, Madison and all the towns we played against, Durand is a positive, supportive, and motivated community. Not only are the basketball players put on stage every game, but our community as well in the actions of our fans. We were the dominant fan base in Madison, and for that, I am very proud to be a Panther.

That same community spirit was evident Sunday afternoon for the Welcome Home assembly. There could not have been more pride and appreciation from the community than what was in the gym that afternoon. That is what high school athletics is supposed to do for their school and their community.

As for the Lady Panthers Basketball team, you made us all proud. Your dedication to the fundamentals, your respect of the game, and your commitment to each other magnified the definition of 'team'. 'How' you played the game was as important as 'how well' you played. You showed us that no matter how competitive the game is, or how important the stakes, you can still have fun playing the game. After all, that is what it is, a game. That is the lesson we all can learn from these young ladies, it is only a game.

Thank you to Coach Poeschel, Coach Kvislen, and Coach Wayne for your countless hours of preparation and practice, but more importantly, for insisting that pride does still matter. You ran a classy team, and can be proud of your work.

Thank you also to Breanna Wozniczka and her pep band, for the energy they provided us during the games and pep assemblies. Not only did they sound great, but were an important part of our cheering section.

Thanks to Randy Johnson who coordinated the entire tournament process for everyone. Without his leadership, we would not have had the fun we had.

Finally, thanks to all of you Panther fans for making the entire experience a positive example of great high school athletics. Sportsmanship is alive and well in Durand, and the rest of the state is learning what we already know.