

Whatever It Takes...

by Sonny Fulks for SWDAB.com

March 11, 2010 – Anna's Derek Billing was soaked with sweat as he trudged up the ramp to the UD Arena press room Thursday night. You could see the weariness in his steps, and his eyes could not hide the emotional stress of having just completed another Division III district title game, and another district win in Billing's outstanding career as a Rocket.

It wasn't easy. A determined Greenvew team had given Anna everything it wanted in terms of competition. Forward Ronnie Drinnon scored 20 points to lead both teams, but he didn't have enough help. The Rams led 24-22 at the half, but could not protect, let alone extend, that lead in the final half. Anna pulled away in the fourth quarter to win, 52-44. Billing was one of three Rockets to score in double figures with 14 points. Dexter Bensman had 13, and Bryce Finkenbine added 10.

"These things are never easy," admitted Rockets' coach Matt Meyer, speaking of his latest district triumph. "But we earned this one more than any of the others, given how we got through the regular season and the sectional. Games like tonight's are getting to be hard on my heart."

Billing wouldn't disagree with his coach. But the senior point guard couldn't have cared less about struggle. All he could think about was the gold medal hanging around his neck and that district trophy...and the opportunity to play one more game.

"This one was the hardest because we didn't have two big guys inside like we've had in the past," he said quietly outside the UD media room. "This year I had to be more creative. I had to hit the boards and rebound more. That's the way we've won this year. We all had to do more, but that's OK. Whatever it takes...all I care about is winning."

In the night's second Division III final Bethel saw its outstanding first season under coach Rick Hickman come to an end as the Bees lost to a more athletic, and deeper, Cincinnati Taft, 68-60...but not without senior Scott Masin making a statement for himself and the Cross County Conference. Masin lit up the nets for 29 points, but the Bees were in foul trouble from the outset and could never get their attack coordinated.

"They're a great group of kids and we had a great year," admitted a disappointed Hickman afterwards. "We just couldn't get it going tonight with the early foul issues and with trying to juggle the lineup the way we had to. Scott was outstanding. It was great way for him to finish."

The final game of the night didn't tip until 9:53, and finished at 11:45 PM...a game between undefeated Middletown Madison and Shroder Paideia that at times resembled a NASCAR race. A back and forth affair for three quarters, Madison pulled away in the final six minutes to win it, 74-62. Madison's Mark Maloney was one of four Mohawk scorers to reach double figures, scoring a game-high 25 points.

District action resumes on Friday night when the Division IV teams take the court at UD. And the district tourney concludes with the Division I schools playing five games on Saturday. The Southwest District Board again reminds all Division I fans of an offer that was inaugurated last year...that being your being able to purchase a special Southwest District Board ticket for \$16 that's good for all five Division I games, plus a free parking pass. You can save 33% for the afternoon, but you have to request that ticket at the UD box office ticket window. Plenty of good seats, of course, are still available.