



MEDIA RELATIONS

Mid-Continent Conference Media Relations

Kristina Petersen, Director
Christopher Hargraves, Assistant
340 W. Butterfield Rd., Suite 3-D
Elmhurst, IL 60126
Phone - (630) 516-0661
Fax - (630) 516-0673

mid-con.com

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Contact: Kristina Petersen, Director of Media Relations

#1 Western Illinois advances to the Championship game at the 2006 Toshiba Mid-Con Women's Basketball Championship

TULSA, OKLA. - Top-seeded Western Illinois advanced to the Championship game of the 2006 Toshiba Mid-Continent Conference Women's Basketball Championship with a 57-40 win over #4 Valparaiso in the first semifinal match-up at the John Q. Hammons Arena at the UMAC in Tulsa, Okla. The Westerwinds are seeking their first Mid-Con title since 1995 on Tuesday, March 7 at 12:30 p.m. The game will be televised live on ESPNU with the winner earning the league's automatic berth into the NCAA Tournament.

The game was a physical affair as both squads found difficulty scoring in the early going. Western Illinois was able to seize control toward the end of the first 20 minutes thanks to **Stephanie Lovingood**, **Zane Teilane** and **Amanda Walker**. After Valparaiso's **Carrie Myers** hit a three-pointer to give the Crusaders a three point lead 11-8 at the 6:41 mark, Teilane and Walker hit back-to-back lay-ups to give Western Illinois a lead it would never relinquish, 12-11. The momentum continued to the end of the half as the Westerwinds outscored Valpo 10-5 from that point for a 22-16 lead at intermission.

WIU put the game out of reach thanks to a 14-0 run right out of the locker room. The Westerwinds would not allow the Crusaders to score until **Tamra Braun** hit a short jumper with 12:06 remaining in the contest. Western Illinois would lead by as many as 19 the rest of the way as it held Valpo to just 28.6% shooting in the second half while hitting shots at a 50.0% clip.

Western Illinois was led by Lovingood's 16 points on 8-of-11 shooting and seven rebounds, while Teilane added 11 points, seven rebounds, three assists and a pair of blocks. **Sarah Miller** added 12 off the bench, including a perfect 4-for-4 at the free throw line. Valparaiso was led by Braun who recorded a 10-point, 12-rebound double-double. **Jamie Gutowski** chipped in eight points, seven rebounds and three steals in 31 minutes off the bench.

Western Illinois improves to 23-5 with the win, including a 13-3 mark in Mid-Con play. Valparaiso sees its 2005-06 campaign come to a close with a 16-13 record, with a 9-7 record in league action.

The Mid-Continent Conference is comprised of nine member institutions - Centenary College of Louisiana, Chicago State University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), Oakland University, Oral Roberts University, Southern Utah University, Valparaiso University and Western Illinois University. The conference has two associate members in swimming & diving. The league offers championships in 19 sports.

2006 Toshiba Mid-Continent Conference Women's Basketball Tournament
Game #5: #1 Western Illinois (23-5) vs. #4 Valparaiso (16-13)
Final Score: Western Illinois 57, Valparaiso 40

Western Illinois Quotes & Notes

COACH LESLIE CRANE:

General Comments:

"I felt like keys to winning this game today was definitely continuing with the offensive pressure and defensive pressure. We knew our guards were quick enough to maintain pressure on the ball and keep them out of their sets."

"We didn't let their guards get up on us. The biggest key was our bench. We have three youngsters, I don't call them freshman anymore...they came ready to play. It was just a great team effort, and at this time of the year is what you need to have."

On the run Western made early in the second half:

"I always tell our kids that the first ten minutes of the second half is the difference in the ball game. We came down and maintained pressure defensively and offensively...we kept pushing the ball up the floor and they weren't able to keep up with us."

On playing in the conference tournament championship game and advancing to the NCAA tournament:

"It is something we've wanted to do but it's not anything that makes or breaks our program. We've got four (conference) championships anyway... We've already qualified for a post-season tournament anyway, so it is just a matter of choosing which one we want to go to."

ZANE TEILANE:

On looking forward to playing in the championship game:

"I think we are really blessed to be here and play in the championship game. We are going to come ready and have a positive attitude for the game."

STEPHANIE LOVINGOOD:

On the contribution of the W. Illinois freshman players:

They're not freshman anymore, they're youngsters. Everyone came ready to play and stepped up. They made the difference. They didn't need a reminder of the importance of this game."

WESTERN ILLINOIS NOTES:

- Western's win is the 23rd this season, extending the school record set by yesterday's win in the quarterfinals.
- Senior Zane Teilane is now 17 points shy of breaking Western's all-time scoring record of 1,528 set by Robin Hasemann ('87-'91). She currently has 1,509 points.
- Sophomore Stephanie Lovingood recorded a career-high 16 points in the win.

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Valparaiso Quotes & Notes

COACH KEITH FREEMAN:

General game comments

"Western played very physical and really did a great job defending us. They defended some of the key components of our offense, and they're to be commended for being able to do that today."

"There were some possessions [at the end of the first half] where we didn't make some shots that we normally will make. Whenever you play Western it's a different type of game. They start a completely different team every time they play us. Lovingood probably scored more [today] than she had all season. We did not do a good job of keeping her away from the basket. I thought that was the difference in the game."

On the difference between this year's Western team and their previous ones:

"The play of Greer has improved. They have two dominant post players [Teilane and Greer] and their guard play is very solid, very unselfish. They're a very physical team. They're certainly the best team I've seen out of Western in terms of character from top to bottom. From an outsider, I think they have kids that are really committed to the team and I think that's why they're good."

On his senior class

"If you have daughters that's who you want them to be like. They are over comers, they're passionate. I look at them and I think this whole athletic thing has done what it's supposed to do for them. Any kid that goes through four years and endures the process, there's something to them that is really solid and valuable. You can't put a price tag on it."

On next year's team:

"I really like who we've signed with who we have returning. We're going to plug some holes nicely and be more athletic. We're going to be a lot bigger on the perimeter, so there's going to be some things that we're going to add that I think will really help us in the future."

JAMIE GUTOWSKI:

On ending her Valparaiso career

"It's tough. You go in the locker room and you can't say 'hey, this gives us something to work hard for [the post season] and remember for next year.' Like I told the girls, I wouldn't want to end my career with 13 other people. We made a good run and the character of our team showed through at the end of the game because we played until there was one second left. I'm just proud of this team and to be a part of it."

LAUREN BECHTOLD:

On her Valparaiso career

"It was incredible. It's hard to finish. The hardest thing to do is look up in the stands at my dad and salute."