

Mullin keys Neshaminy's opening-round win

By Tom Pfaff, correspondent | Posted: Friday, February 12, 2016 11:45 pm

MIDDLETOWN — One definition of success is doing what others are unable or unwilling to do.

By that definition, and her numbers, Neshaminy freshman forward Brooke Mullin had a successful district playoff debut, helping No. 13 Neshaminy to a 48-31 victory Friday night over No. 20 West Chester Henderson in a District One Class AAAA first-round girls basketball game at Fred Gerst Gymnasium.

The victory advanced Neshaminy (19-5) to the second round Wednesday against the winner of No. 4 Mount St. Joseph and No. 29 Radnor, whose first-round game is 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

Following the above definition, Mullin compiled a statistical line against the Warriors (14-8) that other players on both teams were unable to duplicate: a game-high 16 points, along with eight steals, seven rebounds, four blocks and three assists.

"For our team, it was gigantic," Neshaminy coach Joe Lally said. "Neither the coaching staff nor I have been surprised at all: We know what (Mullin) is capable of, and she has been doing it all year. She really has.

"... She doesn't play like a freshman," Lally said. "Her will to compete is phenomenal."

All season, Mullin also has been willing to make plays that other players, especially opponents, are unwilling to make.

Against Henderson, Mullin was diving for a loose basketball rolling toward Neshaminy's offensive left corner early in the fourth quarter — even with a 17-point lead, 36-19.

Neshaminy retained possession, which eventually led to a pair of double-bonus free throws for junior forward Devon Storms, who made the first one with 5 minutes, 51 seconds remaining to cap Neshaminy's 9-0 run that had started in third quarter.

Whether a hard-earned rebound or a key steal, Mullin's hustle, and the ensuing results, have become her trademark this season.

Besides any innate talent, Mullin also has learned her lessons well.

"My AAU coach (John Parsons of the Northeast Rockers) would make us do 10 push-ups if we didn't go to the ground (for a loose ball)," Mullin said. "I've played for him since sixth grade."

Upperclassmen — including seniors Morgan Goldenbaum, Tiara Porterfield and Josafinne McIlvaine — have fostered a positive atmosphere for improvement, where younger players such as Mullin and Allison Harvey, who finished with nine points, could become consistently productive.

"That was really important to welcome the freshmen with open arms, so they're not scared or timid on the court, (worried about) being yelled at by upperclassmen," Mullin said.

Mullin also has been able to learn from Goldenbaum's complete skills: against Henderson, three points, but also

nine rebounds, three assists, four steals and two blocks.

Lally and Neshaminy have benefited.

Leading at halftime, 18-15, Neshaminy pulled away in the third quarter with three 5-point runs broken up by Henderson baskets.

Mullin contributed to all three of those runs, hitting a 3-pointer from the right wing for a 23-15 advantage, making one of two free throws for a 26-17 lead, then making a pair of free throws with 3.4 seconds left in the third quarter for a 33-19 lead.