



Collegian Photo/Shawn Knapp

Katina Mack extends for a layup against Northwestern during the Big Ten tournament quarterfinals. Penn State beat the Wildcats, 85-70, and defeated Purdue 71-69 to win the championship.

Physical play suits Mack just fine

By **ROB AMEN**
Collegian Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Kim Calhoun crossed midcourt and set herself. She folded her arms across her chest, planted her feet and stood firm. Tiffany Glosson never knew what hit her.

The Ohio State center, with her head turned in the ball's direction elsewhere, ran directly into Calhoun as Penn State broke the Buckeye press. Glosson laid on the court for several minutes. Play was stopped, and the sophomore would not return.

Boos rang down from the Ohio State contingent, despite it being a clean pick.

That physical play just typified the Lady Lions' run through the Big Ten women's basketball tournament at Hinkle Fieldhouse last weekend. The No. 2 seeded Lady Lions mauled their opponents with a bruising style of ball in three rounds of play en route to their 71-69 win over Purdue in the tournament championship.

"A physical game is something we didn't want," Northwestern coach Don Perrelli said after his Wildcats lost to Penn State, 85-70,

in the quarterfinals last Saturday. "We don't play well when hands are all over us."

But that is what Penn State's opponents had to deal with all tournament long. The Lady Lions used a suffocating defense, switching from man-to-man to zone, to grab their second straight tournament title. And Katina Mack was the catalyst.

The senior guard from Monticello, N.Y., plays bigger than her listed 5-foot-8 with the mentality of an inside linebacker. And she proved it to the Big Ten — again.

Mack scored 23 points on an assortment of jump shots and driving layups to lead the Lady Lions past Northwestern. The following night she tallied 20 more — while holding Ohio State leading scorer Katie Smith to a paltry 16 points on 5-of-15 shooting — in the Lady Lions' 84-70 semifinal win over Ohio State.

"I know my role on the team," Mack said. "If I'm best at penetrating then that's what I'm going to do."

Nobody could stop her, except her own teammates. Mack caught a Julie Jarosz elbow to the nose during pregame warmups before the

championship game with Purdue. Mack walked off the court with a towel pinching her nose after spending several minutes on the floor. Her nose was originally thought to be broke and she was later taken to a nearby hospital for tests. They showed to be negative, but her nose was severely bruised. Her tournament was over.

It took a combination of players to relieve her.

Tina Nicholson tied a career high with 22 points while Jamie Parsons and Tiffany Longworth picked up the slack on the defensive end to help Penn State past Purdue last Monday night.

"Putting Parsons in there (to start) really spread it out," Purdue coach Lin Dunn said, adding that it gave Penn State another legitimate three-point threat. "We were going to help off Mack."

Without Mack, Parsons was forced to start, playing 38 minutes. She matched up with Boilermaker Jannon Roland, despite giving away five inches, for part of the game and switched with Nicholson on pressuring the ball upcourt.

Longworth, meanwhile, also flew to the ball but was plagued by foul trouble throughout.

"I know my role on the team. If I'm best at penetrating then that's what I'm going to do."

— **Katina Mack**
Lady Lion guard

"I thought we played very good defense the entire tournament," Lady Lion coach Rene Portland said. "Jamie is a great defensive player for us. Tiffany played like fly paper the first half. I thought it was great defense on the ball."

The two did little things that don't show up on stat sheets. They pressured and constantly hung around their assignments. Sure, they scored, but their forte' was defense. Longworth tallied nine defensive caroms and two steals.

The Lady Lion defensive effort came full circle in the opening minutes of the second half against Ohio State. The Buckeye turned the ball over five times in six minutes, enabling Penn State to increase a 44-35 halftime lead into a 55-37 blowout.

Longworth casts endearing image for star struck Indiana

By **ROB AMEN**
Collegian Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — It stood out from the rest of the crowd, a little white, rectangular sign with a simple message — "Go Tiffany, #31, shoot the three."

The homemade posterboard sign constructed in a study hall period was intended for Tiffany Longworth, the Kokomo, Ind., native turned college star. At least that is how 14-year-old Melissa Liffick and her mother Sally perceive Longworth.

Melissa read that the Big Ten women's basketball tournament was to be held in Indianapolis and insisted on going. The two traveled 20 miles north from their Whiteland, Ind., home to reach their destination of Hinkle Fieldhouse.

They came as did the other 22,866 fans who attended the tournament games. But Melissa and Sally Liffick came with hopes of seeing just one player in particular — Longworth, a junior guard on the Penn State women's basketball team.

"I thought we'd embarrass her with the sign," Sally said, adding that when she and Melissa saw Longworth warming up for the Lady Lion quarterfinal game with Northwestern, the two yelled for her. "She didn't act like she was embarrassed. She looked up and nodded."

Longworth did not play like she was embarrassed either.

She tossed in four three-pointers for 12 points against Northwestern in the 85-70 Lady Lion victory and then three more treys the following night against Ohio

State in Penn State's 84-70 semifinal win.

The championship game, though, was a different story. Foul trouble plagued Longworth in the first half, forcing her to sit out and really never get on track offensively. Longworth did rebound in the second half, but finished with just two points after playing all 20 minutes after the break.

It didn't really matter, though. Melissa Liffick was watching her friend and her idol.

"When I'm at school and we're asked who our role model is," the Whiteland Community High School freshman said, "I always say she's my role model."

That might not be such a strong sentiment had it not been for last summer. Melissa knew of Longworth in high school

from reading about her in the newspapers, but they never met until the their teams played against each other during a summer camp in Greencastle, Ind.

Longworth was a counselor for the incoming freshmen at the four-day Player's Choice Basketball Camp. She coached and when Melissa's team played Longworth's, the two talked. One thing still stands out in Melissa's mind.

"I remember asking her what happened to her long hair," she said, noticing that Longworth cut her hair since her high school days. "She said, 'Did it look better the other way?'"

Longworth's success and unselfishness has given Melissa the hope that maybe one day she too can compete at a Division I basketball school like Penn State. Sally

said after Melissa saw that it could be accomplished, Melissa told her she wished she had worked harder at her game, even though she is just a freshman.

Melissa met the entire Lady Lion team and turned to her mother later and said she hopes someday that could be her, in Longworth's position.

"It makes you believe it's possible," Sally said.

It is. Longworth is living proof of that. And she not only shoulders the burden of the role model label many athletes shy away from, she enjoys it.

"I think it's neat," Longworth said. "I looked up to college players too. I think it's nice she's got a role model to look up to."

Maybe because role models are so hard to find.

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