Port Lions Wins Berth to State Roundball Tourney

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Erik Wander/KMXT

When the Port Lions girls' basketball team, which fields just five players, defeated New Stuyahok in the Aleutian Chain Conference championship final at Port Lions High School, the Kings sealed a trip to the 1A state basketball tournament.

KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

The girls' basketball program is now in it's second year, after nearly 10 years of co-ed basketball at the school. The last time Port Lions girls went to the state tournament was in 1992. Dana Strong, head coach of the girls' team and a teacher at the school, talked about what the advancement means to the team and said that because several members of the team are cross country runners, conditioning and endurance played an important role in the five-member team's success.

-- (Strong 1 38 sec. "We've been working for this ... they're all just good kids.")

Strong pointed to defense as one of the team's biggest strengths thanks to their conditioning, but he said offense could be improved.

-- (Strong 2 27 sec. "The key for us is our defense ... they run, run, run, run.")

Strong said that a flu bug currently going through the school is causing some problems for his team, but he thinks there's enough time for them to recover in time for the tournament.

-- (Strong 3 20 sec. "I've got three players down ... to get better, but not a lot.")

Strong, whose three daughters play on the team, told his players to play hard in the tournament, but also to enjoy the experience of participating.

-- (Strong 4 18 sec. "I've told the girls ... go out and play like you have.")

At Sullivan Arena in Anchorage, the Port Lions Kings will open the 1A state basketball tournament Monday at 11:30 a.m. with a game against defending state champions Kiana from the Kobuk Valley Conference. The last time Port Lions girls won a state title was in 1985. The Lady Kings subsequently lost state championship games in 1987 and 1988 seasons.

I'm Erik Wander.

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