The 1982 Lady Knights raised the bar for defense

By JOHN GORALSKI

The 1981-82 Lady Knights went 18-1 in the regular season and 4-0 in the Class LL tournament to earn Southington’s first state title in basketball.

Their regular season efforts earned them a bye in the opening round. Southington shook off the rust of a 10-day layoff to beat Conard by 18. They swept past Windsor, 74-49, and beat Hamden once again with a 68-59 victory in the semifinals. Then, Southington fell behind early in the championship game, trailing by 15 points early. The Knights shot just 18 percent (3-for-33) in the first half but trailed by three at the break.

“I don’t think any one of us thought about losing. It was just a matter of what we needed to do next in order to win,” said Hart. “I don’t think that there was fear of losing ever. It was really about performance and execution.”

Southington battled back in the second half. Hart finished with 21 points. Delisibhp scored a pair of layups in the final two minutes, and Southington edged Westhill, 44-43, to earn the program’s first state title.

“I think we had it as a goal in our minds. We had some really talented teams in our sophomore year and our junior year as well. But in 1982, we had a group of six seniors,” said Hart. “It was our determination. I don’t think we talked about it a lot. We just took it one game at a time, and really performed.”

Hart finished the season with 352 points to claim the MVP trophy. Cayer and Staggs were named as the team’s Defensive Players of the Year. Hart was honored in an induction ceremony for the team’s Defensive Players of the Year. Hart was named to the all-state roster and joined Wight and Cederus on the all-conference team.

The Knights entered the Final Four as an up-and-coming team but finished the decade as the team to beat. The 1982 team was the turning point in the program. That’s why the Southington Sports Hall of Fame committee selected them for the Class of 2011.

On Wednesday, Nov. 9, the team will be honored at an induction ceremony for the Southington Sports Hall of Fame at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville.

“That’s such a company that it’s humbling,” said Hart, who will also be inducted for her individual efforts. “I’m just thrilled. I know that I’m going in as an individual, but I’m just much more excited about being part of that team because it was an absolute team effort right to the finish.”

I try to keep my team as disciplined as possible. They have to respect themselves, coaches, and their teammates.