



Tribune Photos by Chris Siers

The Forrest Lady Rockets pose with their District 7-AA runner-up plaque following Monday night's tournament championship.

Lady Rockets settle for 2nd in 7-AA

By **Chris Siers**
sports@t-g.com

CHAPEL HILL — Lady Rocket coach Hal Murrell knew his team had a tall order to fill in attempting to slow down Community Viqueen juggernaut M.J. Simmons in Monday night's District 7-AA title game.

While the Lady Rockets (11-15) had about as good of a defensive game plan as their coach could have asked for, shots simply would not fall for Forrest and the Lady Rockets fell to the Viqueens, 53-30, and settled for second place in the District 7-AA tournament.

"I thought, defensively in the first half, we couldn't have asked for a better situation. We really did a good job of swarming M.J. and packing it in, contesting shots and got some people in foul trouble and got to their bench. But we could not score. Give them credit, they dictated our flow, offensively, pressured the ball handler. We just struggled to get in our offensive sets," Murrell said.

The game started as a slow grind and from a defensive standpoint, the Lady Rockets held Community (22-6) to just 10 first-quarter points.

But baskets were hard to come by and the only field goal of the opening frame came courtesy of senior point guard Macyn Kirby with 1:08 left in the quarter.

Both teams scored a little better in the second quarter, and Forrest was able to attack the post play of Simmons and Viqueen senior Shelby Cawthon, who were both forced to the bench with foul trouble in the second period.

But when the Viqueen bigs were forced to the bench, it was fellow senior Haley Mitchell who bridged the gap and knocked down a pair of three-pointers to help the Viqueens preserve the lead.

Sophomore Kinslee Inlow added six points for the Lady Rockets in the second period, including a pair of free throws, but Forrest still trailed Community by 12 at the break.

And eventually, after being held to just three first-half points, Simmons took over the game and rattled loose for 13 points in the third



Three Lady Rockets earned season awards for their efforts this year. Earning All-District honors are (from left) Macyn Kirby, Kinslee Inlow and Megan Mealer. Kirby and Inlow also earned All-Tournament honors as well.

quarter, highlighted by a trey from the top of the key with 1:38 to go in the quarter.

With Simmons firing on all cylinders, it was Josie Brown who delivered a pair of late-quarter three-pointers to give the Lady Rocket offense life.

But even with the key baskets by Brown, Community continued to work its offense and preserved the double-digit lead to capture its second-straight district title.

"They're a very, very good team and she (Simmons) is the district player of the year for a reason. I'm really proud of our girls though," Murrell said.

Forrest never quit playing, even to the final buzzer, despite the offensive struggles throughout Monday night's game.

Only three Lady Rockets scored against Community on Monday night, with Kirby and Inlow scoring 12 apiece, while Brown added six.

"We only had three girls to score, but a lot of girls did a lot of things that don't show up in the scorebook. But it's been a good year. From losing so many players to injuries and how far we've come since the be-



Lady Rocket coach Hal Murrell, who was named District 7-AA Coach of the Year, huddles up with his team during Monday night's championship.

ginning of the year, I'm proud we get to host a region game," Murrell said.

After the conclusion of Monday's tournament championship, three Lady Rockets earned all-season honors.

Macyn Kirby and Kinslee Inlow took home All-Tournament honors, while Megan Mealer also earned All-District

honors.

Murrell was also named the District 7-AA Coach of the Year.

Even with the loss, Forrest will still get to host an elimination game in Chapel Hill in the opening round of region play on Friday night against Stratford, who finished third in the District 8-AA tournament.

Should the Lady Rockets win Friday's elimination game, Forrest won't have to travel far for the remainder of the Region 4-AA tournament.

"If we can get by that, we can get over to Community where the region is. It's not going to be a far commute. It won't necessarily be a home game if we can

get to Community, but we won't have to travel to Whites Creek like we did last year and at least have some familiar territory for us," Murrell said.

Forrest 2 8 12 8-30
Community 10 14 16 13-53

Forrest: Macyn Kirby 12, Kinslee Inlow 12, Josie Brown 6.
Community: M.J. Simmons 23, Haley Mitchell 16, Zoey Dixon 6, Anna Haskins 4, Addison Brothers 2, Shelby Cawthon 2.
3-Point goals: Community (5); Mitchell 4, Simmons; Forrest (3); Brown 2, Inlow.
Halftime score: Community 24, Forrest 10.