



MARK GAIL, THE WASHINGTON POST

The Arundel girls' basketball team comes together after a Washington Post 3/14/10 half-time celebration.

Several Wildcats play large role

BY MARK GIANNOTTO

CATONSVILLE, MD. — All season long the Arundel girls' basketball team was known for its two stars who are bound for Division I programs next fall. So when the Wildcats faced a rare halftime deficit against No. 11 Gaithersburg in the Maryland 4A championship game, it caught everyone by surprise when their role players rallied No. 9 Arundel to a 53-40 victory at UMBC's RAC Arena.

After seniors Sherrone Vails (Louisville) and Talen Watson (Massachusetts) combined for just eight first-half points, senior Aleisha Henderson gave Arundel a kick start following halftime, scoring five early points to spark a 9-0 run. The rest of the Wildcats followed suit as they outscored the Trojans by 22 in the final two quar-

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ter points in the second half. "We had to play our roles."

But Henderson wasn't the only lesser-known Wildcat to help Arundel (23-4) secure its fourth state title and third since 2000. After Gaithersburg's Colleen Marshall (14 points) converted a coast-to-coast layup to give the Trojans a two-point lead early in the fourth quarter, it was freshman Kiera McKellery who scored her lone basket to tie the score again.

Once Arundel took its first lead of the game with 5 minutes 41 seconds remaining, the momentum swung for good when senior Tiffany Grant scored her only points on a three-pointer that gave the Wildcats a five-point cushion they would never relinquish.

team during a fiery halftime speech.

Though Arundel was a 4A finalist a year ago, early on it was Gaithersburg (23-4) — which upset No. 14 Paint Branch and No. 2 Wise to reach the final — that looked as if it had been on this stage before.

The Trojans led by nine in the first half and entered halftime leading 23-14 after junior Sarah Seipp (14 points) hit a late three-pointer.

Arundel, meanwhile, made just five of its 22 shots in the first half and the 6-foot-4 Vails (16 points, 18 rebounds, 3 blocks) and Watson (16 points) were mostly non-existent offensively. That changed in the second half; the Division I duo played the collective role of closer, combining for 17 of Arundel's 26 points in the fourth quarter.

"We all just stepped it up at the right time," Watson said.