

Piasa Birds, Greeling finish stellar season with 27-4 mark

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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PIASA – **Piasa Southwestern's** girls basketball team accomplished quite a bit this season – so much so, in fact, the Piasa Birds were voted the state's No. 1 girls Class 2A team in the most recent Illinois Associated Press poll.

Southwestern's girls fell to **Havana** 57-44 on Monday night in the semifinals of the IHSA Class 2A Beardstown Sectional. The Piasa Birds finish the season with a 27-4 mark. Havana is now 29-4 and meets Camp Point Central for the sectional championship Thursday.

Maddy Greeling closed at a glorious career with the Piasa Birds with 19 points, Jenna Moore added 11 points and Kelsey Rhoades had 10 points. The Piasa Birds won 23 straight games before the defeat on Monday.

“It's great to get a pat on the back for our accomplishments,” said **Southwestern coach Steve Wooley** of the top ranking before the game. “It means a lot to the girls, of course, and it's a mark of the success and the effort that's gone into it. “We're a blue-collar, hard-working team. Our philosophy is to go out and always give it our best effort every time out. Just play as hard as we can and see what happens.”

The Piasa Birds have been one of the top teams in the Riverbender area for the past few years, especially thanks to the efforts of a senior class that includes Maddy Greeling, who passed the 2,000-points scored in her career mark earlier in the year, but also includes talented seniors like Malea Bailey, Karlie Green, Erin Laubscher, Kelsey Rhoades and Mackenzie Wolff.

The last couple of years, the Birds have fell a bit short of their dream of reaching the state finals at Redbird Arena in Normal, either because some breaks didn't go their way or because of injury. The Birds, Woolsey believes, have been focused this season because of some of the previously dashed dreams of state tournament glory.

“Our expectations the last two or three years haven't been realized either because of a break that didn't go our way or because we had our post player injured,” Wooley said. “Especially at this time of the year, we emphasize playing one possession at a time and taking things one at a time. We stress, no matter who we're playing that we play at a high level every time out, just taking things one possession at a time and giving it our all every time we're out there.”

Wooley had nothing but kind words to say about his departing seniors.

“We've got a lot of girls that I have enjoyed working with and we'll miss all of our seniors,” he said. “We're pretty thorough in our preparation and I know they'll give 110 percent every time out.”

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)