

At end of rainbow, a reward



**Owen
Canfield**

NEW BRITAIN — A pretty blonde woman wearing a green blazer was getting some air outside packed Detrick Gymnasium. It was halftime of Hartford Public's smashing 83-68 victory over Danbury High in the CIAC Class LL finals.

"How do you like our side?" she asked a friend who had no rooting interest in the game. "We've got a real rainbow over there and boy, are we alive."

The bank of bleachers behind the game benches did indeed reflect the rainbow population of the school — black, white, brown and yellow — and the spirit was something to see.

There are not many things you can honestly say are running smoothly in Hartford right now but Hartford Public and Stan Piorkowski's basketball team are glittering exceptions.

Don't think the Hatters of Danbury got there by accident. Walt Richard's club is deep and loaded with talent, but this was Hartford Public's day. The Owls were never better and their 6-foot-11 ace in the middle, Marcus Camby, lived up to every shimmering superlative that has been written or uttered about

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him in this year of

no defeats.

Hartford Public (27-0) is champion of Connecticut. That sounds pretty good to these ears, no disrespect intended to Danbury or any other place within the borders where basketball is king.

Piorkowski said six weeks ago that the success of the Owls' season would not be measured by their achievements in the state tournament because the young men on the team had already accomplished something that goes beyond trophies and championships. "They are a warmhearted group," he said. "They have real feelings for each other."

So Saturday, that much was already in place. They already had friendships and a bond that all will take with them when they leave the school.

This trophy was something extra, and let's face it, there is no feeling in the world like being able to stand together when the long season has been negotiated and the destination reached and telling the world "we did it."

That is what they are doing today. Hold still, gentlemen and smile for the camera. Marcus Camby is the tall, graceful one there in the team picture. Right in the middle. Piorkowski is the one on the left with the intriguing sweater that has huge dark circles on it.

Amado Cruz should be in there somewhere. He's the school principal and he went out and bought 70 tickets to the final game with money from his own billfold and distributed them to parents and friends of the team members.

Get the picture? It's a picture all of them

Class LL final

HARTFORD PUBLIC 83, DANBURY 68

Danbury (68) — Marcus McCollough 8 1 17, Anthony Scott 8 2 19, D'Quill Osbey 8 2 18, E.J. Harrison 2 1 5, Travis Coates 0 0 0, Rich Chaber 2 1 6, Brian Landecky 0 0 0, Kareem Scott 1 0 3, Tavaughn Bunn 0 0 0, Brian Fager 0 0 0. Totals: 29 7 68.

Hartford Public (83) — Kendrick Moore 8 5 21, Courtney Dunstan 2 0 4, Marcus Camby 13 6 32, Michael Thompson 2 0 4, Tyrone White 3 0 9, Anthony Russell 0 0 0, Ronald Williams 0 0 0, Steve White 0 2 2, Keith Kendrick 3 1 7, Luis Caballero 0 0 0, TaVarr Closs 2 0 4. Totals: 33 14 83.

Danbury	15	10	19	24	—68
HPHS	23	11	25	24	—83

Three-point goals: D—A. Scott, Chaber, K. Scott; HPHS—T. White (3). Records: Danbury 22-5; HPHS 27-0.

will keep in a safe place for many years. Days like March 20 come to few people and should be circled in bright red. It is a significant picture for the athletes, the school and the city.

Danbury gave it everything in this game. D'Quill Osbey and Marcus McCollough were superior players this day. Richard tried to keep his men fresh by using mass substitutions. But the Hartford team was a juggernaut. No combination that Richard tried could shut it down.

Pressing throughout the second half, the Hatters were moderately effective, but Hartford always found a way to shake someone loose — Michael Thompson, Kendrick Moore or Courtney Dunstan mostly — for the bucket. Tyrone White's skills at the point were never more pronounced than in this game. He is clever beyond his years with the basketball in his hands.

One of Hartford Public's best weapons was its extraordinary passwork, particularly where traffic was heavy, under the

hoop. And Camby was the vital difference. He earned his 32 points and when Danbury appeared to be ready to make a run at the lead, commanded the backboards.

At halftime, with Hartford Public ahead 34-25, Ed Griffin stood in the outer hall and suggested that Hartford fans wait a little while before deciding where to hang the championship banner.

"[Danbury] could come back strong because of all the players they have," he said. "That's the thing I would worry about here, that Hartford will get tired."

The last time Hartford Public won the state title or could lay claim to a Parade Magazine All-American (Camby did it this year) was 1962. Eddie Griffin was the man.

Hartford beat Bulkeley High for the title that day, Griffin and Gene Reilly of Bulkeley engaging in a memorable duel. They were two of the most talented high school stars the capital city ever produced. That was the only state title ever won by Hartford Public.

Griffin, who works at Hartford Public and was part of the "rainbow" in the Hartford bleachers Saturday, left the gym a happy and inspired man. This morning he'll be playing a little ball himself in the Hartford Seniors League. He is 49 and has a little paunch now. "Don't let that fool you."

Look out, you senior leaguers. Griffin saw something Saturday that took him back some 31 years. He's not as young as he used to be but today, he may play as if he is.

Due now, a salute to Hartford Public and the decent, dedicated man who coaches it, to the school that Piorkowski says is one of the best places on the planet to get an education and to the rainbow of loyal supporters. Lemme hear that band.