



## Girls basketball: Montclair hammers Fair Lawn in state tournament



*Coach Paul Palek directs his team from the sideline during Montclair's 52-36 win over Fair Lawn in the NJSIAA North 1, Group IV state round Monday night. **Staff photo by Andrew Garda.***

**by ANDREW GARDA**

*garda@montclairlocal.news*

Led by Alisa Wiggins' 22 points and Bianca Fede's 18, the Montclair girls basketball team rolled up a big lead early on Fair Lawn and never looked back, winning the game 52-36. The Mounties outscored the Cutters 23-12 in the first half alone and while Fair Lawn played a solid second half, they never really recovered.

The Mounties' win allows them to advance to the next round of the NJSIAA state playoffs, and they will face Paterson Kennedy Wednesday night.

After running out to an early lead, the Mounties did have a lull as the second half began. Coach Paul Palek had warned his team not to come out in the second half thinking they'd won the game, and it seemed briefly as if the Cutters would claw their way back.

"I told them at halftime (Fair Lawn) is going to come out and throw a punch," Palek said. "They're too good, they're well coached. They've won 15 games. They're going to come out and throw a punch here, and they did."

Montclair didn't get rattled though, and a couple of baskets from senior Jill Jennings and a 7-point run by Fede got them back on track.

"What I was most proud of, was that we took a punch" Palek said. "They got it to 6 with the ball, and we took the punch, got up off the deck and got ourselves together. We made a couple of baskets, Bianca (Fede) had that little run there and then the game was really played at 10 points plus the rest of the way."

The focal point of practice between the last game against Montclair Kimberly Academy and Monday night had been ball movement and making free throws and both were improved over the Mounties' last outing. As the fourth quarter wore on, Jennings and Alisa Wiggins both sank key baskets from the foul line. Wiggins in particular was on fire, making 10 free throws on the day.

"We did emphasize ball movement, keeping the ball going, trying to get the best shot we can every possession," Palek said.

The Mounties also had to adjust to a sudden change in opponent, as Montclair only found out on Friday that their North 1, Group IV state tournament bracket was changed following the [recent troubles at Paterson Eastside](#).

"The girls had a good couple days of practice and they handled the change in the opponent well," Palek said. "I ended up having to cancel practice, (Fair Lawn) had a game so I was able to come up and scout them. Then we practiced Saturday and Sunday to get ready. We had two really good days of preparation, and then it kind of paid off and rolled into the game here, where we could come out on the road and get a win."