Marquette’s Redettes delivered on their coach’s promise in 1976, as the Red & White left opponents Blue in the Bicentennial Year to become...
In the Quarterfinals, the team defeated Lansing Eastern, 67-37, then disposed of Flushing, 62-46, in the Semifinals. All that remained was a rematch with Farmington Our Lady of Mercy.

This time Marquette would not be denied, downing the reigning champs, 68-41. Chapman finished with 23, Hopkins poured in 19, and Krueger hit for 14 as Crill’s starting five went the entire game without a substitution.

“I was impressed with the ladies’ positive attitude as we prepared for the championship game,” said Crill, reflecting on the matchup. “They seemed quiet, very determined, very patient with one another and quite business like. I had coached many games by the fall of 1976, but I never remember another game where we planned together what to do to win, and they followed our plan perfectly.”

The team was the first Class A school from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to win an MHSAA basketball championship, a feat that has not been repeated since.

“The strength that our team held through the entire game was so strong,” said Aho Reynolds. “That’s the way I felt. The more baskets we made the more we wanted. The offense and defense combined everything that night.”

“The crowd was so large for the Final game,” recalled Levandoski Helmila. “There were thousands of people watching and it seemed like only 50 cheering for us. We were glad to face the team that knocked us out of the tournament the year before. We worked together for so long to reach our goal.”

“We wanted that victory not only for the members of the team, but for our coaches, parents and community,” echoed Levandoski Angeli. “We were not only a team, but a family. Our coaches made it clear and instilled in us that no individual was a star alone.”

“Wow! It was fun,” said Hopkins, “a great ending to four years of high school basketball. We dominated the game. We were the underdog, yet we were confident and played to our strengths. Each year I played, the team improved its skill level. In my senior year everything came together and we were unstoppable! Each team member contributed to the outcome, whether it was during practice, or a game. We were focused and determined to succeed.”

“Cheryl Aho’s incredible defense stands out in my mind,” remembered Coombs Gerou. “She stopped one of the leading scorers in the state. Our team defense really stood out.

“Everyone played, and on any given night someone off the bench would score as much as someone who started. We all treated each other with respect and worked together as a team. Coach Crill taught me that anything was possible if you worked and prepared for it. Another memory was our singing on the bus, even those of us who couldn’t carry a tune.”

“It was one of the longer bus rides that set the foundation for that championship year.

“I think that trip (to Detroit) was the biggest difference,” said Crill. “It gave them more experience playing the type of teams they would meet in the tournament. They could see they were talented enough. They had already played the best there was. They realized they could beat them again.”

— Ron Pesch

Ron Pesch is the historian for the MHSAA. To submit story ideas and potential statistical records, write to Pesch at 1317 Lakeshore Drive, Muskegon, MI 49441.

photos courtesy of Marquette HS

GLORY DAYS

Scheduled to be present at the ceremony are:

Barb Crill - Head Coach
Karen Meyers Hafner - Assistant Coach
Cheryl Aho Reynolds - Guard
Sue Belanger - Guard
Lisa Coombs Gerou - Center/Forward
Mary Erspamer - Guard
Janet Hopkins - Guard
Kate Jennings - Guard
Caron Krueger - Forward
Kay Levandoski Angeli - Forward
Karen Levandoski Helmila - Forward
Susan Micklow - Guard
Chris Morin - Guard

The Redettes realized their dream following a 68-41 win over Farmington Hills Mercy in the 1976 Class A Final.

Marquette is still the only Upper Peninsula squad to win an MHSAA Class A basketball crown.