The Ozaukee High School girls' basketball team has finally run out of Thill girls, as the last of the six daughters of assistant coach John Thill completes her final season

The girls' basketball season at Ozaukee High School in Fredonia ended earlier than the team hoped. After the tears finally dried Saturday following a 45-44 loss in a regional final game, the team and coaches could reflect on a successful season.

It was a poignant last game for senior star Kaitlyn Thill and her family — parents John and Cindy and older sisters Trisha, 24, Amy, 26, Jenny, 28, Michelle, 30, and Dawn Thill Driggers, 31. They were all in the stands cheering for Kaitlyn just as she had done for her sisters for many years.

For 21 years, John Thill has been teaching his daughters the finer points of the game he and the girls love.

Thill coached all six daughters, starting with YMCA youth teams from 1989 to

1998, middle-school teams since 1990 and as a junior-varsity and assistant varsity coach since 1995. He also coached Dykstra Select teams during the summer.

“There were times he did YMCA, seventh-and-eighth grade and junior varsity, and they all overlapped a few weeks. After the game Saturday, it hit us — this is it,” said Cindy Thill, who kept the schedules straight, made sure everyone was fed and got them to where they needed to be.

She has carted Kaitlyn to games since she was an infant.

When Kaitlyn was 3 or 4, she would shoot baskets before games and during halftimes, amazing people with her ability to sink baskets.

Kaitlyn doesn’t remember that, but she’s heard about it enough from her sisters, who like to take credit for their youngest sister’s successes. Each sister was a little better than the previous one, but none reached the level that Kaitlyn has, they said.

Kaitlyn, who let her sisters do most of the talking, set school records in single-season scoring with 480 points, single-season and career steals and career assists.

“Kaitlyn kind of got the best of all of us because she grew up seeing what we all specialized in,” Michelle said. “She is the best of all of us, but we all have our bragging rights.”

Dawn, they agreed, was the quickest and the pioneer.

“She was the first one to play and was breaking us all into everything,” said Trisha, who is the tallest and was assigned to guard the opposing team’s best offensive player.

Michelle was a shooter. She and Amy could sink 3-pointers.

“Amy kept the team together. She had a really good attitude,” Michelle said.

“Jenny was the driver and stealer. She was really good on defense.”

Trisha played four years at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and was named defensive player and top stealer all four years. Michelle played one season at UW-Stout.

Kaitlyn hopes to get a basketball scholarship. She met with a Division 1 college coach this week.

John Thill said he enjoyed coaching his daughters and never lamented not having boys.

“He had the best of both worlds — he had daughters who played sports and loved it. He could have had sons who hated sports,” Michelle said.

All six girls said they love basketball and never felt pressured to play. They also played volleyball — something their father knows little about, but they could hear him cheering in the bleachers — soccer, track and softball.

“We could always hear our dad,” Trisha said.

Thill, who wears a red beanie to cover his balding head, admitted he yells.

“I always tell the girls, ‘I don’t yell at them, I yell with them to make them better,’” he said.

“I never looked at who scored the points. I always looked at who contributed to the team — who made assists, who made the other girls better. They (his daughters) all did that. They looked for each other. They probably were too unselfish at time.”

He said he was harder on his daughters than on the other players.

“There were times I had my girls teary-eyed, but they never rebelled,” he said. “I wanted them to be better. I could tell them to do things, and then the other girls could grasp it. They helped the other girls to be better.”

Although there was a lot of bantering back and forth between the sisters, Michelle said, “I don’t think we were so much competitive as supportive of each other.”

Trisha added, “We pushed each other to play better.”

The girls said they and their friends liked having their dad coach them.

“The girls liked my dad as a coach,” Kaitlyn said. “They thought he was fun. He played a lot with us.”

The girls usually got the better of him, Thill said, adding, “My feet don’t move as quickly as theirs do.”

Having six daughters, their father knew how to work with girls, which showed on the court, Michelle said.

“As a coach, he was an integral part of making the girls’ program as good as it is now,” she said. “He coached Y and middle school teams and that fed the high school program.”

It worked so well that Thill’s daughters were rarely on his JV team, going instead to the varsity team.

“They may have played a few games for me, but then we would talk as coaches and move them up,” Thill said. “We practiced in the gym at the same time and the coaches talked together. Lee (LeMahieu, head coach) and I make a good team.”

The 26 years of coaching his daughters went fast, said Thill, who is a master electrician for Wester Electric in Belgium when he’s not coaching.

“I have the best boss,” Thill said. “He let me leave at 3 p.m. for practices. Sometimes, I had to go back later to handle a job.”

Thill played basketball and baseball at Ozaukee High School, so he’s been a Warrior for a long time.

He hasn’t decided if he will coach next year.

“We just got done with a fantastic season,” Thill said. “We exceeded what we thought we would do. We knew we had Kaitlyn, but we didn’t realize we had a whole team that would produce. I just want to let that all settle in and think about it.”

The Thill basketball family includes (front row, from left), Jenny, Amy, (back row) Dawn, Michelle, Trisha, Kaitlyn, father and coach John and mother Cindy. Photo by Sam Arendt