SUNY Cortland Women’s Basketball
SUNYAC Championship Game
SUNY Cortland vs. SUNY Oneonta
Saturday, February 28, 2004; Utica Memorial Auditorium; Utica, N.Y.

FINAL SCORE: Cortland 50, Oneonta 46

UTICA, N.Y. – Cortland captured its first SUNYAC title since 2000 and its fourth overall as the Red Dragons defeated Oneonta, 50-46, in the league tournament championship game. Cortland (24-4) earns an automatic berth into the NCAA Division III playoffs with its victory. The pairings will be announced on Sunday night at 10 p.m. (at www.ncaasports.com or www.d3hoops.com) and the first round is scheduled for Wednesday, March 3.

Cortland was making its sixth straight showing in the SUNYAC title game. The Red Dragons lost in each of their previous three showings after winning titles in 1999 and 2000.

Senior Michelle Ciguera (Massapequa) was named the SUNYAC tournament MVP two days after earning regular season SUNYAC Player of the Year honors. She scored 11 points and grabbed nine rebounds against Oneonta after scoring 26 points in the semifinals on Friday night.

Sophomore Kaylin VanDusen (Schuyler/West Canada Valley) was also chosen to the all-tournament team. She led the Red Dragons with 12 points, including a crucial three-pointer with under two minutes remaining.

Melissa Donohue led Oneonta (21-7) with 12 points and was named to the all-tournament team along with teammate Heather Berger, Oswego's Kelly Mraz and Geneseo's Felisa Brown.

Cortland took a 7-0 lead to start the game and led 21-9 on Ciguera's jumper with 7:10 left in the half. Oneonta closed to within 25-19 at halftime. Trailng 33-29, Oneonta went on an 8-0 run, including six points by Allie Sullivan, to take a 37-33 lead with 11:49 to go.

Ciguera hit a three-pointer about 20 seconds later and freshman Andrea Wilkinson's (New Paltz) steal and layup with 9:15 left gave the Red Dragons the lead for good at 38-37. Cortland pushed the lead to 42-37 on a Ciguera layup with 5:18 left, but back-to-back Donohue jumpers brought Oneonta back to within 42-41 with 3:07 remaining.

Ciguera sank two free throws with 2:46 left, but Donohue answered with a jumper at the 2:18 mark. VanDusen's trey with 1:58 left extended the lead to four points, but Beth Branham hit a three with 26 seconds left to keep Oneonta within a point.

Oneonta fouled on Cortland's ensuing inbounds pass and junior Karen Thompson (Ulysses, PA/Northern Potter) made the front end of a 1-and-1 but missed the second shot. Donohue missed a potential game-tying running jumper in the lane with five seconds left and Ciguera grabbed the rebound. She was fouled and sank two free throws with 3.7 seconds remaining to seal Cortland's win.