

Sisters falls to Gladstone at the buzzer

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The Outlaws traveled to Gladstone for the first round of the state playoffs held on Friday, March 3. A huge crowd made the trek over the mountain to support the Outlaws, and all were stunned and heartbroken with the 26-25 loss.

The contest was a physical, defensive battle. The Portland Referee Association is known for allowing physical play, and Coach Rand Runco told *The Nugget* he felt the team handled the physicality of the game well, but struggled finishing shots at the rim.

Sisters jumped out quick; every starter scored points, and at the close of the first quarter they held an 11-4 lead. As always, Sisters' defense was stifling. The Outlaws are known as the best defensive team in the state and have held teams to 15-to-20 points below their average all season long.

In the second period, the defensive battle continued, and the Outlaws grabbed multiple offensive boards. Tyler and Tanner Head, Keegan Greaney, and Ty Horner pounded the Gladiators on the glass, but they could not finish their lay-ins against the physical play. The Outlaws also lost several possessions due to unforced turnovers. But on the positive side, the Outlaws' defense continued to hold, and they went into the half up 15-7.

In the second half, Gladstone switched to several different court presses, which the Outlaws were able

to handle. Sisters struggled to get the ball to Horner in the paint, but still managed to hang onto the lead.

The Outlaws made three small runs, but each time got stopped due to untimely turnovers. Gladstones' Warren and Rodriguez hit key three-pointers in the third to keep the Gladiators close.

Sisters' guards attacked the basket and again the Outlaws extended their lead. Noah Richards did a great job getting to the basket, converted a tough lay-in and went two-for-two from the line to keep the Outlaws out front.

The Outlaws pulled to a six-point lead in the fourth. They got the ball to Jack Berg, who made a nice lay-in, which forced the Gladiators to switch presses once again.

Gladstone got an offensive rebound and hit Rodriguez, who put down his third three-pointer of the game, and moved them to within three.

Gladstone's guard was fouled while trying to break the Outlaws defense, and hit one free-throw that made it a two-point game. The Gladiators immediately fouled, but the Outlaws were unable to convert.

The Outlaws were up by two with less than 10 seconds on the clock. Gladstone drove to the rim, took a shot, and Sisters was called for a shooting foul.

With seven seconds left, Gladstone missed the free-throw, but a wild bounce gave them back the ball.

The Gladiators took their final time-out. Gladstone's Warren came off a screen, caught the ball at 30 feet and

let it go for a buzzer-beater. After leading the entire contest, the Outlaws and the fans were stunned and devastated with the loss.

Coach Rand Runco said, "We have been in so many close games this season. We knew what we had to do and took good care of the ball, but we did not hit the free throws down the stretch to win."

Sisters went three-for-eight from the line and missed three front-ends from the line in the fourth quarter, which allowed Gladstone to stay within striking distance.

Tyler Head finished with six points, Jack Berg recorded five, Ty Horner and Noah Richards each had four, and Greaney and Ben Saba each added three. The Outlaws went 5-for-12 from the line.

"It was heartbreaking," said Runco. "We played so hard and we are so proud of these boys. Our unforced turnovers really stopped us from pulling ahead. Our defense was awesome and we did a nice job attacking, but we missed a lot of lay-ins and free-throws down the stretch, which would have iced the win."

"It's been a great season with a 17-8 record, with only four losses to 4A teams, and three of those by only one point. This was a very good team, and they were great fun to coach and watch. I'm so proud of them, especially with so many players being new to varsity this year. Our seniors are great role models and really great guys. We will miss them. Keegan Greaney, Jake Larson, JW Bertagna, Tyler Head, Tanner Head,



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Keegan Greaney goes to the rim for a rebound against Gladstone.

and Ben Larson did a fantastic job this season, and we are excited about the young players coming up. Thanks to all the student body and fans for a really good season."

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