

Boys Class 2A State Tournament

# No. 1 Western Mennonite cruises into championship game

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The No. 1 Western Mennonite boys basketball team is sick of coming up short.

The last two years the Pioneers have finished in third place at the 2A state tournament, losing the semifinal game by 20 or more points.

But this season it was Western Mennonite that topped its opponent, and with Friday's 61-37 win over No. 5 Oakland they punched a ticket to the title game.

"It feels really good," Payton Richardson, Western Mennonite's top scorer, said. "But not good enough yet."

Richardson and the rest of the Pioneer squad won't be satisfied until they get that trophy in their hands, and behind them is an experienced staff that is well equipped to handle the stakes.

Head coach Gary Hull will be making his fourth trip to the championship game, but this group of boys is unlike any other he added.

"These guys have been with me since fifth, sixth grade, these little rascals we call them," Hull said as he cracked a smile. "This is one of the closest groups we've had ever. They just really really like each other."

That chemistry shows on the court and translate to the team being able to make the necessary adjustments when a wrench is thrown their way.

After coming out of halftime up 33-15, Western Mennonite banked a few shots to increase its lead but then the Oakers (25-4) went on a 10-0 run to pull within eight points of the Pioneers (26-3).

"We just really focused and



Johnny Williams (11), of Western Mennonite, is fouled by Oakland's Reese Carson (20) during Friday's state semifinal game at the Pendleton Convention Center.

made sure we played together." Richardson said of the team's efforts to build back its lead. "No one tried to be the hero or anything. We just kept playing like we've been all season."

The result was outscoring Oakland 17-6 in the fourth quarter, and cruising to its 24-point victory.

Leading the Pioneers was Richardson with 16 points, and was one

rebound shy of a double-double.

Helping Western Mennonite down the stretch was Johnny Williams, who finished with 11 points behind Alex Nicoli (13 points) and Keaton Hull (12 points).

For the Oakers, Sean Winn netted a game-best 18 points. Cameron Benzel's efforts were felt more on defense, where he grabbed 14 boards to lead to a whopping 17



Keaton Hull (20), of Western Mennonite, tries to put up a shot as Oakland's Colton Brownson (33) blocks during Friday's state semifinal game at the Pendleton Convention Center.

total rebounds. He finished with seven points on the night.

Oakland will face Vernonia in the third-place game at 6:45, and Western Mennonite will follow with a matchup against Columbia Christian for the 2A title.

**COLUMBIA CHRISTIAN 67, VERNONIA 48** — The first half of Friday's final game proved to be worth the wait. The No. 11 Vernonia Loggers were toe-to-toe No. 1 Columbia Christian.

The Knights held on to a narrow 18-17 lead after the first quarter, and at the break were still up by only one point after both teams scored 14 points in the second.

With a spot in the championship on the line, Columbia Christian came out of the break re-energized

**State Championship**



**#1 Western Mennonite (26-3)**



**#2 Columbia Christian (28-1)**

• Saturday, 8:15 p.m.  
• at Pendleton Convention Center

and outscored Vernonia 18-2 in the third quarter. The Knights' efforts put them well ahead of their competition, and they capped of the night with a 67-48 victory.

In the opening quarter, there were six lead changes and one tie. With only 0.02 seconds on the clock and the Knights (29-1) down 15-17, Columbia Christian's Ben Gregg was fouled driving to the basket. His layup was good — to tie the score at 17 points apiece — and so was his shot from the free-throw line to give the Knights the slight advantage going into the second quarter.

Efforts from both teams accounted for three ties and four lead changes in the second, but Columbia Christian managed to hang on to its lead.

The Knights' top scorer was Gregg, who finished with 27 points and 19 rebounds. Dominic Blake followed with 18 points and Isiah Mariscal recorded 11.

Gregg did the most damage in the third quarter when the Knights (29-1) secured the win.

The Loggers (20-9), however, put up three solid quarter, and were led by Clay Sullivan with 15 points. Gaven Everett chipped in 11 of his own and nine rebounds.

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Girls Class 2A State Tournament

# Last two champions, Kennedy and Monroe, will meet for 2018 title

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Two years ago when the Kennedy girls basketball team earned the 2A state title after a 52-32 win over Burns, a cast of six sophomores got the sweet taste of victory.

But after graduatin four seniors that year, these underclassmen needed to step into new roles.

Now, these leaders will have a chance to hoist the trophy one more time as the No. 1 seeded Trojans claimed a spot in the championship game with a 52-42 victory over the Faith Bible Falcons on Tuesday.

"It feels amazing for these seniors girls, because I think a lot of people doubted that they could do this without the bigger hitters we had," head coach Kerry Hall said. "They have worked really hard going out of their roles as being role players to 'I'm in charge' players."

"They have done a fantastic job, and I couldn't be more proud of them — I'm proud of (the entire team), but the seniors girls, this is huge for them."

The Trojans (28-1) have been dominate in their last few outings — defeating teams by a combined margin of 77 points — and that didn't change in the semifinal game at the Pendleton Convention Center.

Kennedy got off to a fast



Sophia Carley (00), of Kennedy, fights to shoot as Katie Fajer, of Faith Bible, applies pressure during Friday's OSAA 2A girls state tournament semifinal in Pendleton.

start with a 13-7 lead over the Falcons (26-3) after the first quarter. Steady shooting, and aggressiveness in the paint gave the Trojans the edge over No. 5 Faith Bible.

The Trojans beat the

Falcons under rim, grabbing 11 offensive rebounds in the first half alone.

Out of the half, the Trojans doubled the Falcons' third-quarter output and despite scoring a game-low

**State Championship**



**#1 Kennedy Trojans (28-1)**



**#2 Monroe Dragons (26-3)**

• Saturday, 3:15 p.m.  
• at Convention Center

10 points in the fourth quarter, were able to hold off Faith Bible's late efforts.

"It feels good because two years ago, it was kind of like the seniors dominated but this year we've got sophomores starting, we have a junior, we have seniors," Hannah Arritola, one of six seniors, said. "It's just a group effort."

Leading the Trojans was Sophia Carley, who recorded a double-double with 14 points and 12 rebounds. Kalysaa Kleinschmit followed with 11 points and eight boards and Molly Jaeger and Arritola combined for 15 points.

"It feels good when you're playing like that," Kleinschmit said. "If you're not going your hardest it isn't as fun, and everybody was playing fun and hard."

For the Falcons, Katie Fajer finished with a game-high 18 points and

10 rebounds for a double-double. She was the only player on Faith Bible's roster to score in double digits.

Kennedy will face the defending champions, No. 2 Monroe, in the title game tomorrow at 3:15 p.m.

Faith Bible will be pitted against No. 6 St. Paul in the third-place game. Tipoff is scheduled for 1:30 p.m.

**NO. 2 MONROE 57, NO. 6 ST. PAUL 42** — The defending 2A champions after headed back to the title game after a 57-42 defeat over St. Paul in the semifinals.

The Dragons (25-3) asserted their dominance early, leading 19-9 after the first eight minutes of play. But that first quarter didn't set the tone until the second half.

In the second quarter, St. Paul held Monroe to only nine points after the Dragons committed two turnovers and the Buckaroos (23-5) had five second-chance baskets.

St. Paul cut its deficit to only seven points before the break, as Monroe led 28-21, and out of halftime, the Bucks remained steady scoring 12 points in each the

second-fourth quarter.

They trailed the Dragons by only one possession early in the third quarter. Monroe had some good looks at the basket and a few second-chance opportunities but couldn't get points on the board.

Finally, Kailey Martin layed the ball in to push Monroe's lead to five, 30-25, and the Dragons went on a 10-3 run to boost its advantage.

St. Paul threatened a tie one more time in the fourth quarter but another run (13-5) in favor of the Dragons led to the eventual game-winning score of 57-42.

Leading Monroe was Peyton Greene with a game-best 19 points. Kailey Martin followed with 16 and Madison Ballard notched 14 of her own. Greene also finished with afternoon with a double-double by grabbing 11 rebounds.

For St. Paul, Isabelle Wyss had 13 points and Logan Robinson followed with 12.

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