

Sports

CLASS 1A GIRLS STATE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Crane gets past pesky Joseph to advance to championship game

By Jayson Jacoby
jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

The Joseph Eagles put undefeated Crane in the unfamiliar position Friday afternoon of having to rally in the third quarter.

But scaring the top-ranked Mustangs is one thing. Beating them is quite another.

After the Eagles took a 23-21 lead early in the third quarter, Crane responded with a 9-3 run to close the quarter, and then held off Joseph's comeback bids in the final period to take a 48-36 win in the Class 1A state tournament semifinals at Baker High School.

In the Mustangs' previous 27 wins, the only teams to come closer are both Class 2A schools — Crane beat Union 47-46 on Dec. 20, and Kennedy 40-34 on Feb. 5.

Among Class 1A opponents, only Jordan Valley, in a 47-19 loss on Feb. 1, held the Mustangs to fewer points than Joseph did.

Joseph coach Lance Homan said he can't fault the Eagles' defensive effort Friday as their 7-game winning streak, dating to Feb. 11, ended.

"Our biggest thing is we wanted to play hard," Homan said. "I thought our girls played well."

Despite a significant height disadvantage, the Eagles contained Crane's junior post, Riley Davis.

Davis didn't score until the final 26 seconds of the first half, and she ended up with just 7 points on 3-of-13 shooting, to go along with a game-high 18 rebounds.

"You always have to focus on (Davis) inside," Homan said. "We're little, so we have to work together."

The Mustangs had to overcome their own offensive struggles — they made 20 of 69 shots, 29%, after a 42% performance in 64-44 quarterfinal win over Country Christian on Wednesday — but also Joseph's peerless junior guard, Sabrina Albee.

Albee scored a game-high 20 points, including a trio of acrobatic layins in which she avoided Riley, who had 5 blocked shots.

"It was a super fun game," Albee said. "We both came to play."

Despite the disappointment of coming close to a monumental upset, Albee said she's confident the Eagles will be ready for the third-place game Saturday at 12:30 p.m.



Kathy Orr/Baker City Herald

Joseph's Sabrina Albee drives against Crane's Kelsie Siegner Friday at Baker High School.

"We'll refocus tonight, go to bed early and go get that third-place trophy," Albee said.

"Sabrina's good," Homan said of the two-time Old Oregon League player of the year. "We put a lot of pressure on her because she can score so quickly. She's fun to coach. She's a gamer."

Albee scored the opening basket, and Brianna Micka had a rebound basket to give Joseph an early 4-0 lead.

Crane missed its first five shots and didn't score until Dani Clark's putback with 4:10 left in the first quarter.

That started a 9-0 Mustangs run, including a pair of layins off steals Crane forced with its swarming full-court press.

Madelyn Nelson hit a 3-pointer with 12 seconds left in the first quarter to cut Crane's lead to 9-7.

The teams traded a pair of baskets to start the second quarter, with Albee hitting a 3-pointer and a runner to get Joseph within 13-12.

Crane sophomore Kelsie Siegner scored two straight baskets, the second off a steal, and Clark had another layin off a steal to push Crane's lead to 19-12, its biggest of the game, with 3:29 left in the half.

But Joseph scored 6 straight to get within 19-18 before Davis had her first basket, on a putback.

Then the Eagle scored the first 5 points of the second half — on Micka's 3-pointer and Albee's driving layin, to

take a 23-21 lead, the Eagles' first since early in the first quarter.

Crane scored 5 in a row — including two baskets by Davis — but Albee again answered, this time with a 3-pointer to tie the game at 26 with 2:58 left in the third quarter.

It was the last tie. The Mustangs scored the last 4 points of the quarter, and Taelor Hammack opened the final period with a conventional three-point play to boost Crane's lead to 33-26.

Joseph got within 5 points twice — the second time on Albee's reverse layin off her own missed shot — but no closer.

Siegner led the Mustangs with 12 points, who were 0 for 13 on 3-pointers. Shelie Doman and Hammack had 9 each, and Clark had 8.

Crane offset its poor shooting by dominating on the boards, with 48 rebounds — 32 on the offensive glass — to Joseph's 31.

The Mustangs also forced 22 turnovers while committing just 10.

Albee was the only Eagle in double figures. Micka added 7 points.

JOSEPH (36)
Albee 8-23 20, Micka 3-0-7 Nelson 1-0-3, Crenshaw 1-11-3, Wilcox 1-0-1-2, Curry 0-12-1, Bateman 0-0-0, Hickman 0-0-0-0, Totals 14-47-36.

CRANE (49)
Siegner 6-11-13, Hammack 3-3-6-9, Doman 4-12-9, Clark 4-0-2-8, Davis 3-14-7 Witzel 0-2-2, Zander 0-0-0, Thompson 0-0-0-0, Carson 0-0-0-0, Totals 20-8-17-48.

Joseph 7 11 8 10 — 36
Crane 9 12 9 18 — 48
Three-point baskets — Albee 2, Nelson, Micka.
Total fouls — Joseph 16, Crane 16.

Crosshill Christian boys end Prairie City's win streak

By Corey Kirk
ckirk@bakercityherald.com

Minutes into the game, the ball was passed to Crosshill Christian's Eagles senior Evan Dallum. He set up his footing, fired off his shot and the swish of the net echoed in the Baker High gymnasium.

"It's easy though when that first one goes in and you get a feel for it," Dallum said.

Behind Dallum's shot, the Eagles rolled past the Prairie City Panthers 63-40 in a quarterfinal game at the Class 1A boys state basketball tournament Thursday evening.

Prairie City, winners of 23 straight, kept things close in the first half behind senior center Cole Dieter.

"We just had to realize where he was," Eagles head coach Brian Spaulding said. "We know that if he would get the ball, it's probably going up."

After leading 31-18 at halftime, the Eagles

kept up their pressure on both sides of the ball, pushing their lead to above 20 points midway through the third quarter. Offensively, they kept spreading the ball around, founding the open teammate like Dallum, who made five 3-pointers during the game and led all scorers with 15 points.

"We are really an unselfish group, and we always find the open man," Dallum said. "But we can always play better."

As the Eagles continue to move forward in the tournament, Spaulding hopes that team doesn't lose their identity of being a team.

"Just working as a team of five out there instead of five individuals, that is the key for us," Spaulding said.

Dieter led the Panthers with 14 points. Lucas McKinley added 12.

Andrew Stoddard had 14 points for Crosshill Christian, and Carter Knox added 10 points.

CLASS 1A BOYS STATE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Nixyaawii rallies to top Trinity Lutheran

By Corey Kirk
ckirk@bakercityherald.com

With their hopes for a second consecutive state title on the line, the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles relied on defense.

Before an electric crowd in the Baker High School gym Thursday afternoon, Nixyaawii freshman Shane Rivera had two key steals in the final 40 seconds as the Golden Eagles scored the final five points to beat Trinity Lutheran 66-63 in a quarterfinal game at the Class 1A state boys basketball tournament.

After Mick Schimmel, who led Nixyaawii with 25 points, made two free throws with 50 seconds left to tie the score at 63, Rivera snagged the first of his two steals.

Trinity Lutheran's Matthew Eidler fouled Schimmel, who made 1 of 2 free throws to give the Golden Eagles the lead with 31 seconds remaining. Rivera stole the ball again with 17 seconds left, and this time he completed the play with a layup for the final points of the game.

"Our kids stayed the course," said Nixyaawii coach Shane Rivera. "It was a good win, but we are not done yet."

Rivera said it was exciting to watch his son make game-changing plays.

"I'm as proud as any parent could be," Coach Rivera said. "When it was his time to step up, it was satisfying for sure."

From the tipoff of this rematch of the 2019 state title game, which Nixyaawii won 59-42, physicality was shown by both teams as players were diving for loose balls, grabbing rebounds and, unfortunately, racking up team fouls. The teams combined for 41 fouls in the game and 38 free throws.

Trinity Lutheran coach Kyle Gilbert said he was pleased with his team's

Golden Eagles' bid for repeat ends with Friday loss

Nixyaawii's run toward a second straight boys state title ran into the Damascus Christian Eagles Friday afternoon. The Eagles, 27-1, led most of the way and won 61-53 in a semifinal at Baker High School.

Jacob Zakharyuk led all scorers with 32 points.

Mick Schimmel led Nixyaawii with 24 points.

sense of urgency. "They leave everything out on the court; during this game I never questioned their drive and their attitude," Gilbert said.

After the teams played to a 17-all tie after the first quarter, the Golden Eagles broke the game open by going on a 15-0 run in the second quarter led by Schimmel, a senior, and Magi Moses, who had six points each.

Nixywaaii outscored the Saints 22-6 in the quarter and led 39-23 at halftime. Rivera was content with how much

his team was on the same page during the second quarter spurt.

"The kids were verbally communicating with each other, making the right adjustments," Rivera said.

As the players trickled back onto the hardwood in preparation for the second half, Gilbert saw a change of mentality in his team, and he knew they weren't going to go down easily.

"They came out without any fear," Gilbert said.

Shots began to fall for the Saints, and they scored more points in the third quarter — 26 — than in the first two quarters combined.

Led by Scooty Gilbert, the coach's son, who had a game-high 28 points, Trinity Lutheran cut Nixyaawii's lead to 53-49 entering the fourth quarter.

"He just had that feel for that kind of a game and those bigger moments," coach Gilbert said about his son. "At times we rely on him to bring us back."

Eidler's free throw with 4:31 left in the game tied the score at 55. Nixyaawii then scored four straight points, including a 3-pointer by Rivera, to lead 59-55 with 3:31 left.

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