

Grant Union Prospector Alcie Moore drives down the court with Gervais Cougar Katie Hanson (20) hot on her trail.



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Girls

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“They all contributed and executed,” Moore said, adding the team worked together for the opportunity to be at the state tournament. “They deserve this,” she said. “It’s an honor to coach them, and we look forward to our first game Thursday.” Gervais head coach Kyle Buse said this was the first time this group of girls has been to the playoffs. “I think we came out, and we put ourselves in a hole, but they kept fighting,” he said. “They were up against a tough challenge.”

He said his team will grow from this experience. “We had an intense game,” Hailie Wright said. “I think that’s what overall won us the game.” She added, “It’s always exciting to play at a state tournament, and we’re going to go over there and compete.” Wells said their defense made the difference. “We’ve always had great offense, but defense is what will win us games at state,” she said. “I’m really proud of how everyone played, and we kept pushing no matter how far we were up.” Looking ahead to Thursday, Grant Union

and Coquille are closely matched. The Prospectors are No. 5 among OSAA’s 2A teams with an 18-5 overall record, 11-2 in league. They’ve scored 1,345 points and allowed 990 points. Coquille is ranked No. 4 with a 25-1 overall record, 12-0 in league. They’ve scored 1,545 points and allowed 787 points. This is Grant Union’s third consecutive trip to the state tournament. Last year, they finished in fourth place with Casey Hallgarth as head coach, and the previous year the team finished sixth when Mark Mosley was head coach.

Boys

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City outscored Dufur 14-13 to keep a 30-16 lead going into halftime break. The majority of bleacher seats were filled with Panther fans, many waving orange bandanas as they cheered. The Rangers narrowed the margin to 8 points in the third when Tanner Masterson and Daniel Radcliffe combined for 6 points at the start. However, Field, Burke and Deiter went after the rebounds and outscored Dufur 21-16. McKinley sank a 3-pointer in the quarter, and Ranger Cooper Bales landed two 3-pointers, including a long shot at the buzzer. In the final 8 minutes, Dufur outscored Prairie City 17-15, but the Panthers took the 17-point win. Dufur head coach Hollie Darden said his team has come a long way since last year, when they didn’t make it to their district tournament.

“This year, we made it to districts,” he said. “We went and beat Joseph in a hostile environment in the first round, a team who had beaten us earlier during the season.”



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The Prairie City Panthers, led by head coach Sam Workman, celebrate after ringing the celebration bell, which signals they’re moving on to the state championship tournament. From left: Jayden Winegar (11), Brandon Horrell (12), Syd Holman (23), Lucas McKinley (22), Cole Deiter (back), Declan Zwegardt (20), Marcus Judd, Jolari Field (3), Jonathan Lawrence (back), Opie McDaniel (5), Caden Madden (behind McDaniel), Brett Copenhaver and Levi Burke (behind Copenhaver).

He said he was proud of the character shown by his team and how well they played defensively.

“Obviously, Prairie was a little bit more athletic on this given night,” coach Darden said. “They had

some kids that really came to play and kind of dominated us physically. I was proud of their effort and

proud of them for making it this far into the playoffs, and hopefully we’ll come back next year.”

McKinley said he’s excited to make a second trip to the state tournament with his team. Last year, the Panthers had a second-place finish at state. “We got the ball inside and played good fundamental basketball,” he said of the night’s game. Holman said they talked about this being their last home game. “We are an unstoppable train right now — Baker, we’re coming,” he said. Burke said the most memorable part of the night was how they played as a team. “Everybody on the team was in it to win it,” he said. “We have some experience now. Last year it was like deer in the headlights.” Thinking about the upcoming games, Burke said, “We have a big red target on our backs right now.” Panther head coach Sam Workman said it was a team effort that won the night’s game. “I’m proud of them,” he said. “It’s fun to watch when they’re playing like this.” He said, at halftime, he simply told them “keep doing what you’re doing.” He said they’ll take the same approach in their game with Sherman — “keep playing good basketball.”



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