

# Mustangs capture first berth at state tourney since 1971



Dana Reid and Benji Pearson perform dance routine at halftime

By Ashley Conklin

Heppner's boys basketball team found out just how special a Sweet 16 birthday celebration can be on Friday, March 7.

Playing in the regional tournament where 16 teams compete for 8 state tournament berths, at the Pendleton Armory and vying for a state tournament spot, the Mustangs captured the regional championship with a 55-54 squeaker over the Grant Union Prospectors.

The game was as close as the final score indicated. The contest was tied 11 times and there were 13 lead changes. Neither team led by more than five points at any time.

Early in the opening period Heppner grabbed a quick 4-0 lead. But Grant Union went on a 13-4 run and settled for a 13-10 advantage after the first period.

The Mustangs turned the ball over 8 times in the first period in the face of the Prospector full-court press, but settled down to commit only 13 turnovers the rest of the way and only seven in the second half.

"We had a problem getting the ball inbounds," said Heppner coach Brent Eggers. "We changed our press breaker after that and took the

pressure off of Todd (Lindsay)."

Heppner forged ahead 27-23 in the second quarter on a basket by Wayne Wilgers. But from there the Mustangs got into foul problems just before intermission.

Point guard Duane Ball picked up his third foul at the 3:43 mark and sat down with 2:20 left in the half. Tony Clement picked up an offensive foul, his third, just 54 seconds before intermission.

The game was tied 29-29 at halftime. Two people, Terry Balcom and Larry Nelson were responsible for keeping the Prospectors in the game. Nelson had 11 points and Balcom 10 in the first half.

Grant Union inched out to leads of 37-34 and 39-36 in the third quarter. With Lindsay and Bryan Padberg scoring the next six points, the Mustangs had a 42-39 advantage.

Padberg came in for Ball who was hit with his fourth foul at the 4:43 mark. Ball, who had three assists, did not play after picking up his fourth foul. However, he really wasn't needed as Padberg, the field general, ran the army and gave his usual admirable performance, scoring four points, grabbing two rebounds, and dishing out five assists.

The Prospectors scored the final



Keith Kenison goes for the bucket

three points of the period and as the second coming off a great pass by Padberg to put the Mustangs ahead 47-44 with 6:05 left.

Trent Harrison, who has given Heppner solid minutes all season backing up Clement and Kenison, dumped in one of two free shots for the Mustangs with 5:37 to go. But his effort was sandwiched by baskets by Balcom, who tied the score at 48-48 with 5:16 showing on the clock.

Padberg found Clement under-

neath for a 50-48 lead and 3:58 to go. Balcom countered 31 seconds later to knot the game 50-50.

Padberg made a steal and found Lindsay who was fouled. Lindsay hit both and Heppner led 52-50 with 2:52 left.

Almost a minute later Lindsay had a chance to give the Mustangs a four point lead but misfired on the bonus attempt.

Mosley hit two free throws with 1:41 to go to tie the game, but Wilgers dropped in two charity tries with 1:20 left putting the Mustangs up 54-52.

Padberg was fouled by Nelson with 21 ticks on the clock. He missed, but Nelson, who snared a rebound, was called for traveling.

Wilgers was fouled on the in-bounds play and hit one of two free throws with 16 seconds to go making the score 55-52.

Balcom came down and fired a shot up and was fouled by Padberg with nine seconds to go. The shot spun in and then out. Balcom dropped in the two shots offered to pull Grant Union within 55-54.

A second later Balcom fouled out by fouling Clement, but Clement missed. Grant Union grabbed the rebound and everybody in the Armory held their breaths.

Steve Thatcher drove down and was stopped by an official's whistle. Thatcher charged into Kenison with two seconds left.

Kenison inbounded to Wilgers and the game was over at 55-54, earning the Mustangs their first state tournament berth since 1971.

"We peaked at the right time," said an elated Eggers. "It was a team effort and we did what we had to do to win."

"We knew what we had to do to stop Balcom," said Eggers. "But it's hard to stop a great player. He's the best guard we've faced all year. I was happy to see him foul out. It took the ball out of the hands of their best outside player."

"Part of our game was to force Nelson further outside," he said. "Tony and Keith did a good job of executing it (our game plan), plus having help from our wings (Lindsay and Wilgers)."

"Todd made the big plays in the second half for us again," said Eggers. "Bryan gave his usual clutch performance and Wayne hit 3

of 4 clutch free throws in the last minute. It was just a total team effort."

Heppner has played the underdog role all season and enters the tournament with a 15-7 season record, definitely a Cinderella team.

Eggers feels his team will not have to worry about inexperience at the state tournament level. "We're familiar with the Armory court," he said. "We'll have the backing of the crowd which will be an added bonus."

"I think it would be foolish if anybody overlooked us," continued Eggers. "We've proven ourselves and people know what to expect."

"We've surpassed all of the goals we set for ourselves, but we're not ready to finish our season yet," he added. "I think we will compete really well at state. This has been like a dream come true."

Cinderella has one last dance with Prince Charming and hopes to fit into the glass slipper.

On Saturday, March 8, the Prospectors still had another chance to advance to the state tournament as they met the Enterprise Savages. But it was the Savages who found gold and panned out a 77-67 win. Enterprise downed the Riverside Pirates 68-52 on Friday afternoon for the right to meet the Prospectors.

The Mustangs will meet the Sheridan Spartans on Thursday, March 13 at 8:45 p.m. in a quarterfinal game of the state tournament. (See related story about Sheridan).

| Statistics  |       | 1     | 2  | 3  | 4  | F   |
|-------------|-------|-------|----|----|----|-----|
| Grant Union |       | 13    | 14 | 13 | 12 | 54  |
| Heppner     |       | 10    | 19 | 13 | 12 | 55  |
| Grant Union | FG    | FT    | F  | R  | A  | P   |
| Balcom      | 8-11  | 4-7   | 5  | 1  | 5  | 22  |
| Gregory     | 9-9   | 0-0   | 0  | 2  | 0  | 0   |
| McDaniel    | 0-1   | 0-0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   |
| Cates       | 0-2   | 0-0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 1   |
| Thatcher    | 1-3   | 1-2   | 3  | 3  | 4  | 3   |
| Nelson      | 7-19  | 1-2   | 4  | 12 | 0  | 4   |
| Cherry      | 0-2   | 0-0   | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0   |
| Malone      | 3-19  | 2-2   | 3  | 2  | 0  | 2   |
| Mosley      | 2-4   | 2-2   | 1  | 7  | 0  | 4   |
| Totals      | 21-43 | 12-15 | 16 | 28 | 9  | 23  |
| Heppner     | FG    | FT    | F  | R  | A  | TOT |
| Padberg     | 2-5   | 0-1   | 3  | 2  | 5  | 4   |
| Ball        | 1-2   | 0-0   | 4  | 0  | 3  | 2   |
| Hayes       | 1-2   | 0-0   | 1  | 2  | 0  | 2   |
| Harrison    | 0-2   | 1-2   | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1   |
| Wilgers     | 2-10  | 3-4   | 0  | 2  | 1  | 7   |
| Clement     | 4-13  | 0-1   | 3  | 7  | 0  | 8   |
| Lindsay     | 9-28  | 4-5   | 2  | 4  | 4  | 22  |
| Kenison     | 3-4   | 5-9   | 12 | 1  | 1  | 9   |
| Totals      | 21-43 | 12-15 | 16 | 28 | 9  | 23  |

Fouled out: Balcom. Total fouls: Grant Union 14, Heppner 14.

## Win over Spartans gives Fillies championship



Lana Reid goes for rebound against Spartans

By DANA REID

The Fillies won against the Pine Eagle Spartans at last week's class A regional basketball wasn't real pretty, but it was a win.

The first quarter marked a Pine Eagle lead, the only time during the game.

The Fillies played tough defense but according to coach Mike Royer, couldn't put their shots through the hoop.

"We didn't shoot the ball very well in the first half," he said, "but I'm sure their defense had something to

do with that."

Heppner was also impatient with their offense in the first half. The Fillies took control to start the second half of the game and hit fire in the third quarter.

The Fillies carried themselves through the final period as they defeated the Pine Eagle 54-46 for a berth at the state basketball tournament.

The Fillies defense was a big asset in their regional championship game.

"We played tough defense for four quarters and hit key shots when we needed them in the second half," commented Royer.

Lana Reid led the way for the Fillies with 23 points and 8 rebounds. Missy Eubanks added 15 points and 12 rebounds while Missy Turner had 5 assists and Dana Reid had 3 steals.

"Elizabeth Gulick had game high honors with 24 points and she grabbed 12 rebounds."

"Even though she scored 24, I thought we did a good job against Gulick," said Royer. "Penny did a great job inside."

Penny Connor had 7 blocked shots in the game.

"It was a tough physical game," said Royer. "We beat a very good team."

The class A state basketball tournament opens Wednesday March 12, with 8 girls teams attending.

The tournament will be held just as it was for the district and regional tournaments, at the Pendleton Armory.

The Fillies will face the Amity Warriors for their first game of the tournament on Thursday, March 13 at 1:30 p.m.

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