

Lady Cardinals stun Powder Valley, move on to Baker City

The Ione Lady Cardinals started March Madness a couple of days early, stunning the Powder Valley Badgers 34-31 at the first-round state playoff game held at Ione on Saturday, Feb. 26. In one of the biggest upsets of the 1A playoff day, the Cardinals ended the Badgers season while booking themselves a trip to the OSAA State 1A

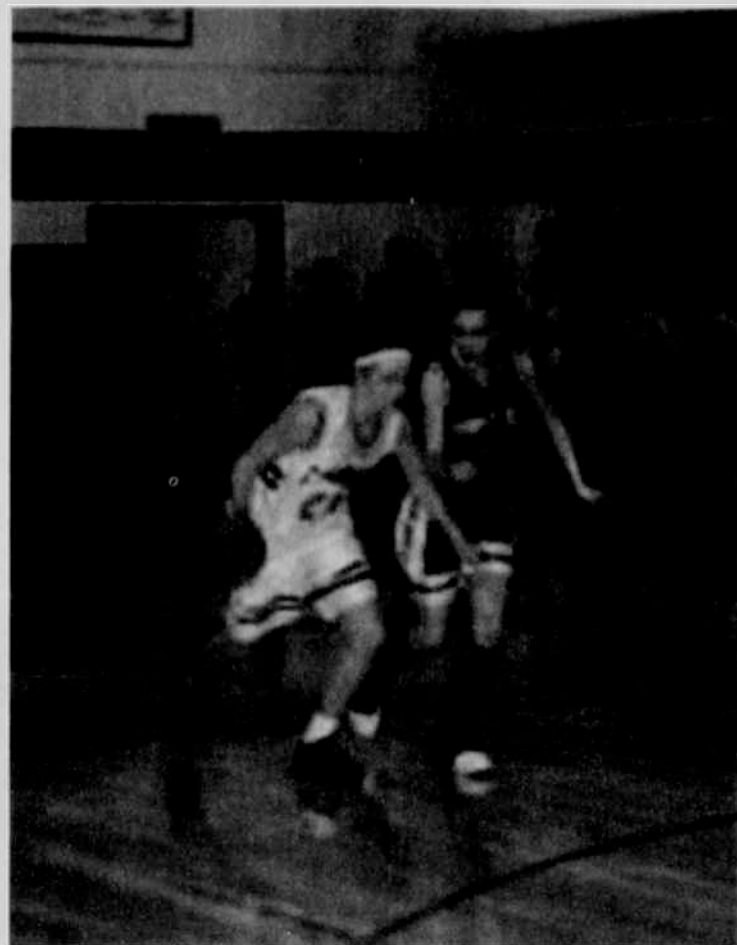
Tournament in Baker City March 2-5.

The atmosphere was decidedly that of a playoff game in Ione Saturday, with the stands jam-packed and the Ione Community Band on a roll. The game was close early, with Ione trailing 10-7 after a tight first quarter. But starting with a bucket at the end of the first

and extending six minutes into the second, Powder Valley posted 15 unanswered points to put the Lady Cardinals deep in a hole. With two minutes left to go in the period, Ione trailed by 16, 23-9. At that point, Sara Peck dropped in a basket and with just 15 seconds remaining in the half, Jenny Griffith made a

much-needed 3-pointer to make the half-time score, 23-12. A huge factor for Powder Valley was 6-foot junior, Kali Miller, who scored 13 of her team's 23 first half points including nine of 10 shooting at the free throw line.

Using stepped up defensive pressure and improved ball-handling, the momentum slowly started to



Sara Peck gets around Badger defender on way to upset victory. photo by Jeri McElligott

Cardinals win first-round playoff game

The Ione boys' varsity delighted an enthusiastic home crowd with an exciting win over the visiting Country Christian Cougars in the first round state tournament playoff game held in Ione Friday, Feb. 25. The Cardinals used solid free throw shooting to seal the Cougars fate, winning 78-61. The Cards now advance to the State 1A Tournament in Baker City March 2-5, where they will meet more Cougars, the Crow Cougars, in their opening match on Wednesday, March 2 at 3:15 p.m.

After a couple instances of playoff game jitters, the Cardinals went on an 8-0 run at the end of the first period to take the lead after one, 19-11. From the tail end of the first and the beginning of the second, the Cards went on a 19-2 tear to build a 16-point lead early in the second period. Country Christian was not to be counted out, they answered with a 10-point run of their own, including two 3-pointers to reduce Ione's lead to just six with under two minutes to go before halftime. The Cards were able to rebuild the lead to nine by halftime, thanks to

back-to-back buckets by Nick Christman and free throws from Tony Bolin and Tyler Brown. The Cardinals led at the half, 37-28.

The Cardinals didn't let up in the second half, running their full speed game and flustering the Cougars with stiff defense. At times in the third period, it looked like the game might become a runaway with the Ione lead growing from nine to 15 points at the end of the quarter, 56-41. The young Country Christian team, which started two freshmen and two juniors, never gave up though and kept charging back. The Cougars reeled off seven unanswered points to start the fourth quarter, pulling to within eight points early in the quarter and then again with about 1:30 remaining in the game. Country Christian held the Cardinals to just three field goals in the final period but were forced to foul heavily in an attempt to regain possession of the ball. Consequently, the Cardinals went to the free throw line 23 times in the final period, connecting on 16 of those attempts. Near perfect free throw shooting by Brown, Tyler Raible and Kelly



Ione Cardinal Tony Bolin brings the ball upcourt against Country Christian Cougars. The Cards advanced to playoffs in Baker City with the win. photo by Jeri McElligott

Thompson with under a minute left in the game stretched Ione's lead out to 15 points. Christman hit a basket with under 15 seconds left to make the final margin 78-61.

Brown led the team in scoring with 23 points, while grabbing 11 rebounds, dishing out four assists and making six steals. Christman, a senior, came up big with 15 points, three assists and two steals. Bolin had 13 points, five boards, five assists and five steals and Thompson had 10 points, six of those from the line, two assists and two steals. Also scoring for the Cardinals were Raible with eight points, Arthur Ekstrom with six and Alan Rietmann with three.

The Cardinals shot 48 percent from the floor compared to 40 percent for

the Cougars. Both teams had good percentages from inside the three-point line—58 percent for Ione and 56 percent for Country Christian. The Cougars stayed in the game by hitting twice as many threes as the Cards (six). The Cards visited the free throw line 33 times in the game, making 23, while Country Christian was 13 of 19 from the line.

The game had a great playoff atmosphere with a capacity crowd and the community band in full swing. The game had plenty of drama and no one dared leave their seats until the final buzzer sounded to make sure of the outcome.

"This was a great win for us and the community of Ione," said Coach Dennis Stefani. "The kids played great defense and once again that is what won the game for us."

shift in the second half as the Lady Cardinals began to chip away at the Badger's lead. Shots began to fall for Ione at the same time as Powder Valley's first half scoring went stone cold. Towards the end of the third quarter, Ashly Grams and Griffith hit back-to-back 3-pointers to pull the score within five, 27-22.

In the fourth, Peck used some picture perfect post moves, scoring three times to pull the team within three, 31-28. With 1:45 remaining, Ashly Grams capitalized on a steal with a lay in, making the score 30-31. The Cards flustered the Badgers and got another steal. This one looked like a perfect lay-in by Amber Patton but was called back by the refs due to a foul on the ground. With 1:10 remaining in the game, Patton swished two clutch free throws and the Cardinals took their first lead of the game since a brief 5-4 advantage in the first quarter, 32-31. Grams grabbed another steal and was fouled on the lay-in attempt. With 26.4 seconds on the clock, she made one of her two tries to put the score at 33-31.

The Badgers barreled down court and pumped up a three-point attempt, which bounced out of bounds over the top of the backboard. Griffith was fouled on the inbounds pass and she came through with another critical free throw, making the score 34-31 with 11.6 seconds remaining. Powder Valley got off a final

three-point attempt that bounded off the rim at the buzzer as the partisan home crowd erupted.

Peck, a senior, led the team in scoring with 10 points, followed by Patton with nine, Griffith with seven, Grams with six and Kylee Svetich with two. Patton grabbed 10 rebounds to lead the team, while Griffith and Grams each tallied three steals and three assists.

"It was a huge win," said Coach Ryan Rudolf. "We were down by 16, but the girls didn't quit or give up." He noted that Powder Valley became tentative in the second half, scoring just four points each the third and fourth quarters, something he attributed to his team's good defense. "Defense won the game for us," said Rudolf. "The girls played hard. They could have folded but they didn't."

The Lady Cards will face St. Paul in their opening game in Baker City. "St. Paul will be a tough game for us," said Rudolf. "The girls have been underdogs all year so I think if we play hard, anything can happen."

This will be the Lady Cardinals first appearance at the State Tournament in Baker City since 2000 and the first under the direction of Coach Rudolf. Last year, Rudolf's first year coaching the team, the girls' team qualified for the first round state playoff game but was eliminated by the eventual state champion, Crane, in close game.

Support our Troops group receives notes of appreciation

The Support Our Troops support group held their "Project Cookie Drop" last month. They have received notes of appreciation from the troops, expressing how much it means to know that Heppner is behind them.

Not only has the group received notes, one soldier, Joseph Mollahan, son of John Mollahan of Lexington, called saying, "What a surprise to get a packages from Heppner." He added that he opened it and shared the cookies with his buddies and said they were really good. He also said that they were doing fine and that it wasn't as bad as the media portrayed.

Another note came from sailor Melissa Reed, niece of Kay Rene Qualls and granddaughter of Donnie Reed. Reed's ship had been sent to the aid of the tsunami victims and then on to the Arabian Sea. She too said how great it was knowing people remembered them.

The support group will be meeting again on Sunday, March 13 at 2 p.m., in the basement of the Methodist Church to fix Easter boxes. The group appreciates the donations that have come in from the community. Donations are still being accepted and are greatly appreciated. Also helping with the projects is Columbia Basin Electric Co-Op who donated money for postage. Everyone is welcome to attend the March 13 meeting.

It has also been reported that the weather has been cold at nights in Iraq, getting down to 30 degrees, cold enough to freeze the water and then getting warmer throughout the day. There also has been snowfall in the mountains.

Some items that are being recommended for donation include: sun screen, lip balm, shampoo, moisturizer, foot powder, DVD movies and music CDs, beef jerky, salted peanuts, trail mix and crackers.

Pastors invited to write Easter articles

The Heppner Gazette is once again inviting area pastors to write an Easter article for the March 23 edition of the

paper. Easter is March 27 this year. Articles should be submitted by Monday, March 21 at 5 p.m.

Typed articles (hand-written, if legible) can be submitted by mail, P.O. Box 337, Heppner, OR 97836; fax, (541) 676-9211; email, editor@rapidsolve.net; or by dropping it at our office at 188 W. Willow, Heppner.

Please also include information about any special services your group will be holding.

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