Cardinals rebound to earn number-three seed

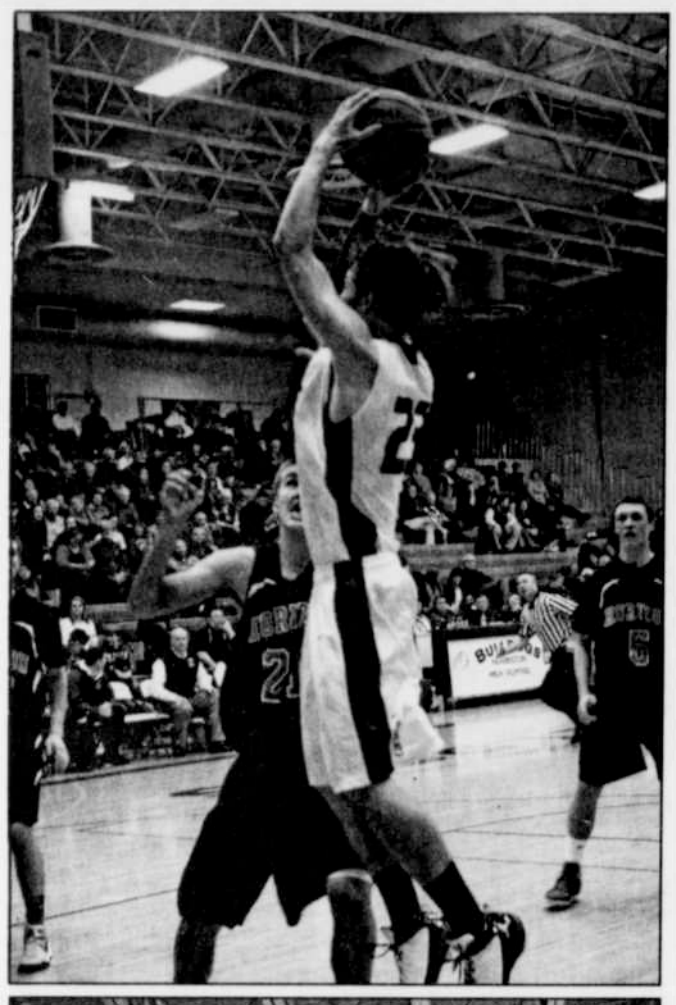
By Anne Morter

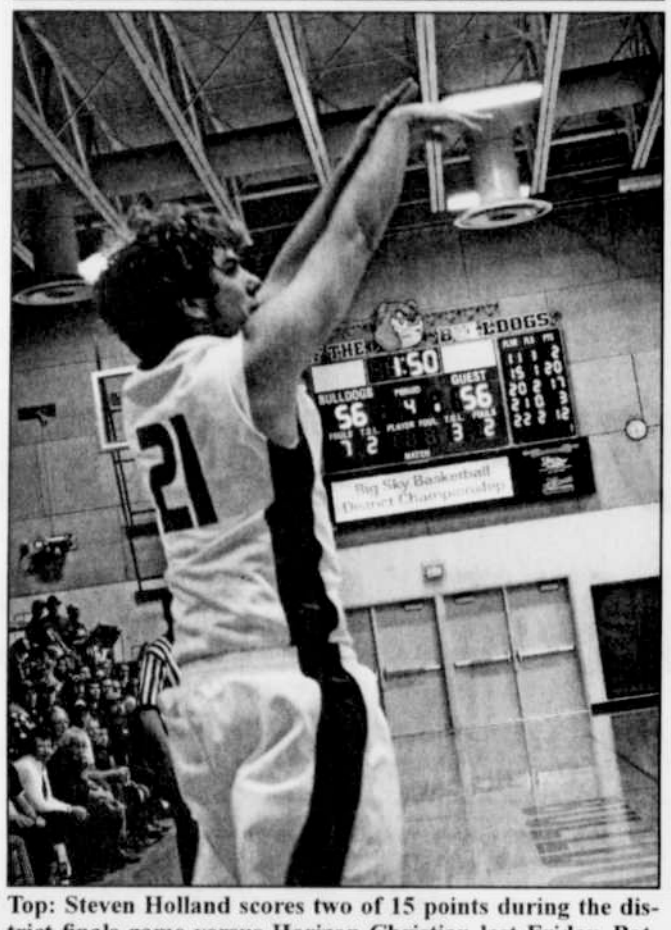
The Ione Cardinals rebounded from an opening day loss to earn a state playoff slot with an exciting, overtime victory over Echo at last weekend's Big Sky District Tournament at Hermiston High School. The Saturday win gave the Cards the number three seed from the Big Sky and propelled them into the sub-state playoff rounds. They will play Wednesday, February 22 against the number-two seed from the Valley 10 league, Damascus Christian in Portland.

The Cards opened tourney action against Horizon Christian of Hood River. Although the Hawks entered the tourney as the number two seed from the Big Sky West, they did not play like a number two team. Behind sizzling three-point shooting, the Hawks jumped out to a 32-17 first quarter lead, dropping in six treys on the way. A Hawk dunk in the second quarter lengthened the lead to 19 with two minutes left to go in the half but the Cards used a 7-2 run to close the half trailing by 14, 44-30.

The Cards just could not contain the hot-shooting Hawks in the second half and, although they cut the lead to ten twice in the third quarter, Horizon continued to pull away, leading by as much as 20 midway through the fourth quarter. Ione closed the game with a 9-2 scoring run to make the final margin 78-66 for Horizon.

Zac Orem led the Cardinal scorers with 18 points. Steven Holland added 15. Luke Jobes hit a couple important threes in the opening quarter and scored eight in the game. Omar Juarez made a big four-point play in the fourth after being fouled on a three pointer, and ended the game with six points.





Top: Steven Holland scores two of 15 points during the district finals game versus Horizon Christian last Friday. Bottom: Zac Orem shoots for three points, leading Ione to an overtime victory against Echo that earned them third seed going into state. *-Photos by Paula Emmel*

From the get-go, Saturday's match-up with Echo had the markings of a barnburner. The teams had split in their regular season meetings and, this time, both teams were laying it on the line for the chance to advance to the sub-state playoff rounds. Echo jumped out to a 9-2 first quarter lead but the Cards closed the quarter with a 9-0 run to lead after one, 16-15.

Echo regained the lead in the second quarter and built as much as an eight-point buffer but the Cardinals stayed intense to pull within two points late in the half. Echo scored a bucket with 18 seconds left to take a 30-26 lead to the locker-room at halftime.

Evan Rietmann had seven points in the third quarter, and Luke Jobes reminded the Cougars they should never ignore him with an offensive rebound and a drive up the middle. A trademark Zac Orem jumper with 19 seconds left in the quarter had the Cards trailing by two points entering the fourth, 43-41.

The fourth quarter turned into a three-point shoot-out with Ione notching three and Echo canning four. Zac Orem and Luke Jobes hit back-to-back threes early in the quarter as the Cards enjoyed one of their few leads of the day, 49-45. But as would be the case throughout the final quarter of regulation, Echo answered and tied the score a total of four times. An Echo three-pointer with 41 seconds left put the Cougars up by one but Luke Jobes answered 10 seconds later with a three of his own and the Cards went up by two. Echo put back an offensive board to tie the score at 61 and that is where the score stayed at the end of regulation.

In the four-minute overtime period, Echo handled the ball very deliberately, running two whole minutes off before their first score, hitting the second of two free throws. Zac Orem hit a jumper in the middle with 1:48 remaining. Echo answered with a bucket with 1:03 showing on the clock. Luke Jobes then again did the impossible as one of the shortest players on the court, weaving under the basket and putting up a reverse lay-up to give Ione a skinny 65-64 lead with 49 seconds left. Echo took a shot with 19 seconds showing on the clock but lost possession on the miss. They tried fouling in the waning seconds and finally, with 11.8 seconds on the clock, the bonus kicked in for the Cards. Zac Orem hit both ends of a one and one, and Ione led 67-64. Echo got off two three-point attempts but time ran out and the Cardinals took the win 67-64.

Zac Orem had a monster game, leading all scorers with 27 points. Luke Jobes had 12 and Steven Holland and Evan Rietmann both had 11.

Lady Cards take district championship

By Anne Morter

The Ione Lady Cardinals went into the Big Sky District as the number two team from the east side of the league but emerged on Saturday night as the number one team in the entire league, downing previously undefeated Condon/Wheeler to clench the championship.

The march to the title started on Thursday with a gritty win over Horizon Christian. From there, the Lady Cards provided an exciting come-from-behind win to defeat Dufur in the semifinal game to earn another shot at Condon/Wheeler, a team that had defeated them twice in the regular season. In the championship game, the Lady Cards played fearless basketball to take the district title.

As the number one seed from the Big Sky Conference, Ione earned the privilege of a first round, state-playoff bye before hosting the winner of the Pine Eagle-Crane game on Friday, February 24.

"Getting the number one seed is huge," said Coach Mike Garrett. "Although we expect a dog fight on Friday night, we only have to worry and prepare for one game this week instead of two, which is great."

The Lady Cardinals opened tourney play against Horizon Christian, the number three seed from the west side of the Big Sky Conference. Defensively, the Cards played well, holding the Hawks to just two points in the first half but, offensively, the team looked out of sync, only scoring 16 points in that same half. The Hawks put a bit of a scare into the Cards in the third quarter, knocking down three three-pointers and pulling within six points midway through the period. Leading by ten going into the fourth quarter, the Lady Cards outscored Horizon 17-6 to pull away for the 41-21 win.

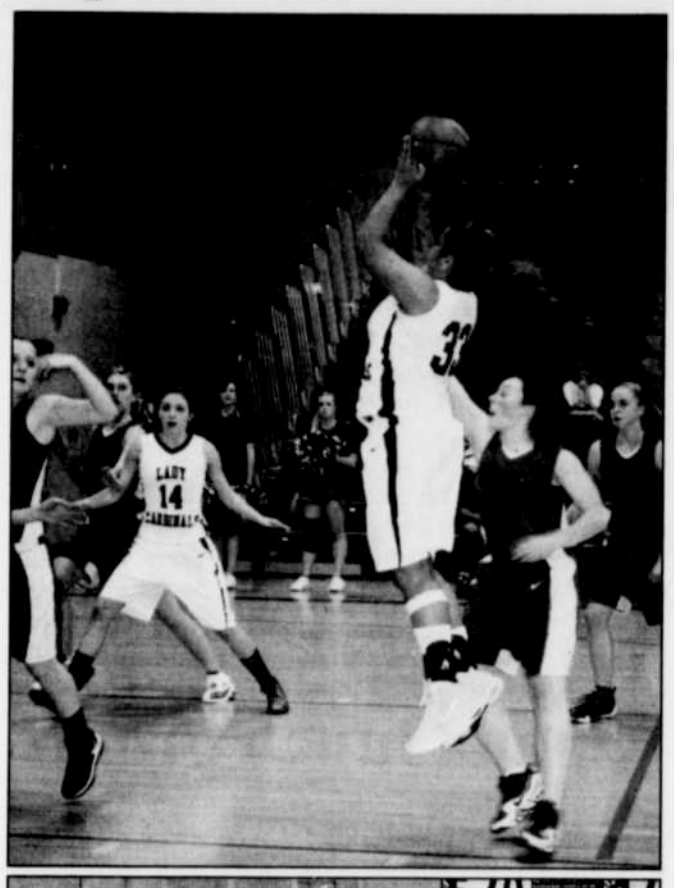
"It took the kids a long time to get used to the Hermiston floor," said Garrett, noting that it is 10 feet longer than the court at Ione. "Finally, in the fourth quarter, we got a couple easy baskets and the rim opened up for us."

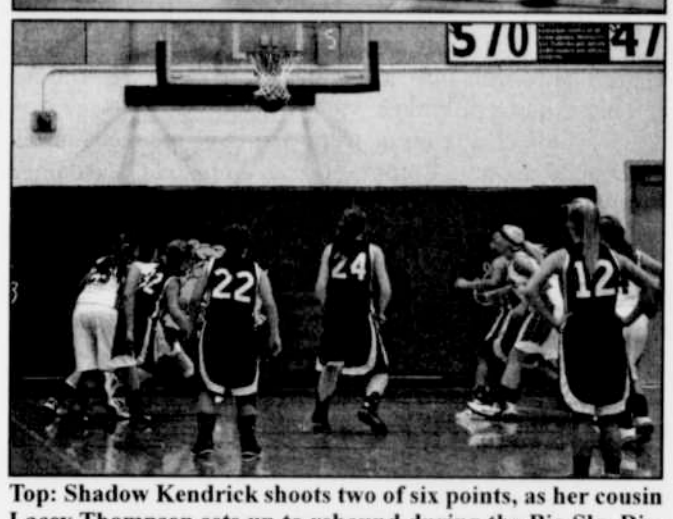
"That last six minutes jump started us for the Dufur and Condon/Wheeler games. We got a little of our mojo back," Garrett added.

JoAnna Patton was the game's leading scorer with 13 points. Lacey Thompson added nine and Stacee Halvorsen had eight.

On Friday, the Dufur Rangers hit the court and smoked the nets in the first half of their semifinal match-up with the Lady Cards. Dufur led 11-9 after one but outscored Ione 17-7 on the back of 64% shooting to lead 28-16 at the half.

"They made our 2-3 zone defense look pretty poor in the first half," said Garrett. But Garrett had a heart-to-heart chat with the team at the half, letting them know their goals were still attainable and a 12-point game was not out of reach. Whatever he said worked and worked well. The Cards erased the Ranger's lead in less than five minutes and outscored the Rangers 20-4 in the quarter to lead 36-32 entering the final frame. Shadow Kendrick scored 10 points in the game, all in the third quarter, to lead the charge.





Top: Shadow Kendrick shoots two of six points, as her cousin Lacey Thompson sets up to rebound during the Big Sky District game versus Horizon Christian last Thursday. Bottom: JoAnna Patton makes her 21st point as lead scorer for the team during the game versus Dufur at district finals. *-Photos by Paula Emmel*

Dufur was not done yet, knotting the score at 39 with 1:46 left to play. Ione played patiently, looking for good shots. Dufur got a little rattled and sent the Lady Cards to the line four times in the last minute. JoAnna Patton hit a pair with 1:09 to play to put Ione up 41-39. With 4.5 seconds left in the game, Makenna Ramos hit the front end of a one-and-one to give the Cards a three-point edge. Coach Garrett sent all his rebounders to the other end of the gym to reduce the chances of a rebounding foul. Ramos missed the second free throw but, in the middle of four Dufur rebounders, she picked up her own rebound and banked in a lay-in at the buzzer to make the final margin 44-39 Ione.

JoAnna Patton had another big game for the Cards, leading all scorers with 21 points. Shadow Kendrick had 10 and Makenna Ramos had eight.

After watching the Ione boys win a thriller in overtime, the crowd for the girls' championship game was revved up for the Ione v. Condon/Wheeler game. The Knights held their biggest lead of the opening quarter with a five-point margin, 13-8, before Shadow Kendrick canned the first of what would be five three-pointers with just under a minute left. The score after one was C/W 13, Ione 11. In the second quarter, Ione switched to a triangle and two defense but the Knights adjusted to it quickly, charging out to the biggest lead the game would see, 29-18 with under a minute left. A Cardinal bucket and free throw cut that margin back down to eight at the half, 29-21.

After the half, the Cardinals "caught fire offensively," again erasing the deficit to tie the game at 38 heading into the final quarter. In the fourth quarter, Ione switched defenses again, going to a 3-2 zone in an effort to extend the Knights out further and forcing them to take longer range shots. Meanwhile, on the other end of the floor, Shadow Kendrick hit two threes and JoAnna Patton followed up with a bucket to put the Cards up 46-38 with 3:40 left in the game. The Knights clawed back into the game. With 10 seconds left, Jessica Logan sunk a shot to cut Ione's lead to two, 51-49. The Knights fouled JoAnna Patton, who missed the front end of a one-and-one with 2.8 seconds left. C/W's Ellie Logan brought the ball down court looking for a winning three-point shot but lost her footing at the last moment and the Cardinals took the win 51-49.

"It was a great win for us," said Garrett. "It was the best game we have played this year."

Shadow Kendrick led the team in scoring with 20 points. JoAnna Patton added 16.

"It was a great weekend for us as a community," Garrett said. "The boys got third; we won the pep band and sportsmanship awards, and we got a bunch of kids on the all-league team."

He also noted that the Hermiston venue worked out very well for the team.

"We were treated like kings. Hermiston did a great job. We were very happy with their hospitality."

Mustangs end basketball season just short of state

Fall to Knights 43-40

In Pendleton, at the 2012 Blue Mountain Conference district basketball tournament last weekend, the Mustang boys were eliminated by the Irrigon Knights, ending their run for state.

The Knights led 16-8 after the first quarter of play. The Mustangs kept the pressure on, playing hard and cutting four points off the Irrigon lead; they trailed the Knights 20-16 at the half.

Jake Bowles had the hot hand for Heppner in the third quarter, helping to keep the score close by hitting a couple of three-pointers. The Mustangs also did a good job of breaking the Knights' full-court press offensively, and held their high-scoring opponents at bay the entire game.

In the fourth quarter, with the Mustangs down by seven in regulation, Cody Orr hit a long three-pointer to pull within four of Irrigon. As time ran out, though, the Knights hit their free-throws and won the game 43-40.

Orr finished with 15 points and Bowles scored 12 to lead the Mustangs in scoring.

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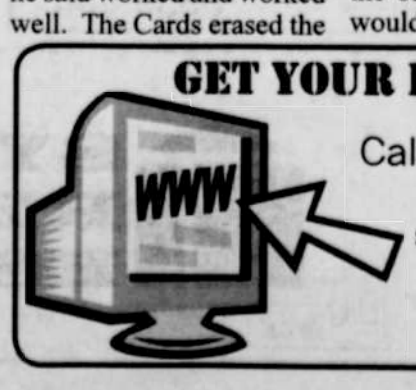

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