

SPORTS

BOYS BASKETBALL



Eric Morken / Echo Press

Alexandria guard Kristen Hoskins lets out a scream after teammate Carrson Jones (11) made a bucket in the lane and was fouled in the Section 8AAA quarterfinals win over Detroit Lakes on Tuesday night.

It's anyone's section to take

Cardinals feel early loss at Bemidji has no bearing on Friday's semifinals

By Eric Morken

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Alexandria head coach Forrest Witt and two of his standout guards in Carrson Jones and Kristen Hoskins all delivered a similar message on Tuesday night after a dominant win over Detroit Lakes in the Section 8AAA opener.

What happened in the regular season has no bearing on what will happen Friday in Bemidji. The Cardinals hope that's the case as they head north to play on the Lumberjacks' home court in the section semifinals in a 7 p.m. tip.

"We just have to play as one," Jones said after scoring 15 points in Alexandria's 73-46 win over Detroit Lakes on Tuesday. "On the back of our warmups it says 'Family.' We just got to play as a family and know that every guy out there is going to be dialed in."

Alexandria and Bemidji played each other once during the regular season. It came on Jan. 2 in a game the Lumberjacks (19-6) controlled throughout the second half in a 69-48 final.

"They're very physical, but we're a much different team than we were Jan. 2 when we played them," Witt said. "We were kind of trying to figure out who we were. We weren't a real tough team when we played them that time, and they exploited that. I think we figured a lot out about ourselves and the approach we need to have against a good team like Bemidji. I think our kids understand that and that it will be a much better game than the first time."

The numbers support Witt's feelings that the Lumberjacks were the more physical team that night in early January. Bemidji almost had three players post double-doubles. Senior forward Colten Jensen had 19 points and 14 rebounds. Senior guard Silas Hess finished with 15 points and 10 boards, and sophomore forward Gavin Luksik added 18 points and eight rebounds.

It was still a 27-25 game at halftime that

SECTION 8AAA SEMIFINALS

What: Alexandria (19-8) vs. Bemidji (19-6)

Where: Bemidji High School

When: Friday, March 6, at 7 p.m.

night, but Bemidji outscored the Cardinals (19-8) 42-23 over the final 18 minutes. Hoskins had 17 points for Alexandria, and Colton Roderick chipped in 12 as the Cardinals were held to their lowest point total of the season.

"They got the best of us," Hoskins said on Tuesday. "We weren't really ready 100 percent. We were kind of sloppy, but I think we're going to be ready when we play them."

Hoskins matter-of-factly shook his head no when asked if a regular season game that got away from them has any effect on a rematch with that same team in the semifinals. This is a different Cardinals team with a much different sense of urgency in the playoffs.

Players and coaches for Alexandria believe this team has grown a lot since the middle of the season. The Cardinals went through a stretch from Feb. 8 through Feb. 18 where they lost four of five games, but all of those losses came against winning teams in Delano (23-4), Moorhead (21-6), Fergus Falls (22-4) and Sartell-St. Stephen (16-10).

"Sometimes you look at who are you playing, and are they doing things that make things difficult for you?" Witt said. "Good teams do that, and we had a seven-game stretch there against teams we felt were very good. I thought we played pretty good basketball. We weren't great. I thought we learned a lot of things and how it comes back to little things. Getting a timely stop or making a defensive rotation that seems very small, but against a good team it's a huge factor."

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WRESTLING



Joe Brown / Forum News Service

Minnewaska senior Dylan Jergenson raises his hands in victory after winning a 3-0 match in the Class A 220-pound semifinals at the state tournament on Feb. 29. Jergenson overcame a traumatic brain injury he suffered during an accident his sophomore year to finish fourth at state wrestling as a junior and second as a senior.

DYLAN'S WINDING ROAD TO THE FINALS

Minnewaska senior finishes career in state title match after traumatic brain injury as a sophomore

By Eric Morken

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Dylan Jergenson walked to the end of the tunnel that leads onto the Xcel Energy Center floor where almost 8,500 wrestling fans were watching the state championships on Feb. 29.

Jergenson, a senior, had his headphones and Minnewaska warm-up jacket on as he anxiously looked over the three ongoing matches and the fans looking down from above.

He was only minutes away from wrestling in the 220-

pound title match himself. This is the scenario that Minnesota prep wrestlers dream about as young kids. All the lifting, the sprints and the camps that happen when nobody is looking are done with the idea that one day it will lead to those mats under the Xcel Energy Center lights.

When all the work does lead to a chance at a championship, no wrestler wants to lose.

Jergenson shook the hand of his opponent and the opposing coaches before putting his head down and walking into

the tunnel after a 7-0 loss in the title match against top-ranked Dominik Vacura (52-1) of Badger-Greenbush-Middle River.

He was disappointed in the immediate aftermath. It took only a few minutes, though, before a smile was back on his face.

"Sophomore year, I got into a hunting accident and I didn't know if I'd be able to do any sports ever again," Jergenson said. "Just to be able to do any sports in general, and then be able to be half decent out there and win some matches is fun."

Jergenson was far better than "half decent" in wrestling after that near-death experience in the fall of his sophomore year.

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Knights advance to section final with win over Hancock

By Jared Rubado

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The Hancock girls basketball team was one of the hottest teams coming into the Section 6A playoffs. That was until they ran into West Central Area at the University of Minnesota-Morris on Wednesday night.

The Knights (22-7), the top seed in the South subsection, played a complete game on both sides of the floor to beat the second-seeded Owls (22-7) 56-43 to advance to the Section 6A title game.

"It was kind of a dream makeup for us," WCA head coach Eric Schoenbauer said. "We did the little

things throughout the whole game. It couldn't have happened better for us because Hancock is a very good team."

Hancock took an early lead behind the deep-range shooting from Rylee and Carlee Hanson. After 5-0 run, the Owls led 14-9 early in the first half.

"Their determination to get to the rim is incredible," Schoenbauer said. "They have size, athleticism and they can handle the ball. If you start to sag off of them, then they'll pull back and hit some shots. They're very dynamic as a duo."



Jared Rubado / Echo Press

Brynn Fernholz (11) drives to the hoop during West Central Area's subsection championship win over Hancock on Wednesday night at the University of Minnesota-Morris.

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