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Berkeley High advances in NorCal girls basketball playoffs

By Damin Esper
Correspondent
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The clock ran out and Berkeley High's Elisha Davis smiled as wide as you can smile, clutching the ball as she headed off the court. The Yellowjackets had just beat visiting McClatchy-Sacramento 69-56 on Thursday in the quarterfinals of the California Interscholastic Federation Division I Northern regional girls basketball playoffs. And it was time to celebrate.

Davis scored 17 of her 24 points in the second half, but it was the Yellowjackets defense that won this game. Berkeley harassed the Lions' Ariel Thomas throughout the second half, after Thomas had made it look easy in the first half. Thomas finished with 28 points — 14 in each half, but she made only two field goals after the break.

"We wanted to get the ball out of her hands," Yellowjackets coach Cheryl Draper said. "She was killing us the first half. We wanted to make sure she felt more pressure. She didn't get as many shots off. We didn't want her to drive. We wanted her to kick. And if she kicked, we didn't want her to touch the ball back."

The strategy worked. Berkeley (26-3) opened the second half with a 21-7 run to take command of the game, 51-33. Although McClatchy (25-7) fought back in the fourth quarter, cutting the deficit to six at one point, the lead was just too much.

Thomas, who is bound for the University of Oregon, had her way in the first half.

"She is a very good player," Davis said. "She's got the moves, she's got the speed. She really tested my defense so I know what I need to work on."

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Deer Valley 54, North Salinas 46: Cydnie Mixon, who was sidelined with an injury for much of the season, scored 14 points to help the Wolverines (24-7) beat the visiting Vikings (25-4) and advance to Saturday's NorCal Division I semifinals. Deer Valley will travel to No. 2 seeded Oak Ridge, which beat Oakland Tech 76-44 in its quarterfinal game.

Deer Valley's defense starred for the first three quarters as it led 23-17 at half and 34-22 going into the fourth.

— Staff

Carondelet 74, St. Francis-Sacramento 43: The host Cougars (25-5) took a step toward defending their NorCal Division II title with a convincing quarterfinal victory over the Troubadours (23-9).

Carondelet, which never trailed, took its first double-digit lead in the first quarter at 16-6 on a 3-pointer by sophomore Melissa Russi, who replaced injured Ricki Radanovich as a starter. The Cougars took a double-digit advantage for good at 26-14 early in the second quarter on another Russi 3-pointer. Russi finished with 11 points.

Carondelet's lead grew to 65-29 by the end of the third quarter, and starters Russi, Erica Payne, Hannah Huffman and Erin Boettcher didn't play in the fourth quarter.

"We realized that without Ricki here, we really had to lock down on defense," said Huffman, who had 23 points.

The Cougars had four players score in double figures, including Payne (13 points) and Boettcher (11). Briana Charles had 16 points for St. Francis.

— Phil Jensen

Northgate 68, Vallejo 52: Greer Kleber had 23 points and 14 rebounds to lead the visiting Broncos (27-4) to an upset over No. 4 seed Vallejo (25-7) in the NorCal Division II quarterfinals. Tess Soper added 19 points for Northgate, which led by six points at halftime and pulled away in the third quarter.

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The Broncos will visit No. 1 seed Archbishop Mitty in Saturday's semifinals.

— Staff

Bishop O'Dowd 70, Vanden-Fairfield 53: For much of the first half of their NorCal Division III quarterfinal at Chabot College, the Dragons found themselves in an unusual position — they were playing from behind.

After being down by as many as eight points in the first quarter but tied 31-31 at halftime, O'Dowd went on a 15-3 run to start the third quarter and led comfortably the rest of the way. Alexis Bostick's steal and layup capped the decisive run.

"It was just adjusting to adversity, every game has its challenges," said Mikayla Lyles, who led the Dragons with 18 points. "(At halftime) we just said, 'Do you want this to be our last game?' and we all said 'no.' "

The Dragons (27-3) will continue their season against one of just three teams to beat them this season, Sacramento.

Despite giving up 53 points, the Dragons defense only allowed 11 field goals. The Vikings (26-6) scored nearly half of their points from the foul line, connecting on 26 of 42 attempts, and were led by Jazmine Miller's 20 points.

Robie Mayberry was a key part of the Dragons' second-half surge, finishing with 14 points and 12 rebounds.

— Stephanie Hammon, correspondent

St. Mary's-Stockton 75, Miramonte 53: The visiting Matadors weren't at all intimidated at the fact that the Rams are ranked No. 1 in the nation and even led briefly in the second half, but St. Mary's reclaimed the lead in the third quarter with a 13-0 run and didn't look back in a NorCal Division III quarterfinal game.

"This is our 23rd road game this year," Miramonte coach Kelly Sopak said. "And we have been up here before so we were going to lay it all on the line. Our kids were excited coming in."

The teams traded baskets to start the game until a 13-0 Rams run gave St. Mary's (31-1) a 15-4 lead. The Matadors (22-8) battled back to trail by just a point at halftime and led by a point in the third quarter before the Rams pulled away.

Alyssa Johanson led Miramonte with 15 points. Stephanie Golden had 14 and Janine Loutzenhiser added 12 points.

McDonald's All-American and Gatorade California player of the year Chelsea Gray led all players with 27 points.

— Dave Campbell, correspondent

St. Mary's-Berkeley 52, Mercy-San Francisco 33: The top-seeded Panthers took control in the second half, outscoring the visiting Skippers 35-19 to advance into Saturday's Division IV semifinals.

The Panthers labored through a first half in which they settled for jump shots against the much smaller Skippers (22-9) and only led 17-14 at halftime.

But the Panthers (29-3) scored the first six points of the third quarter on two buckets from Danielle Mauldin and one from Emily Vann for a 23-14 advantage.

St. Mary's six-point spark to open the quarter turned into a 15-3 run for a commanding 32-17 lead with 4:11 left in the third. Vann scored six points during the run, all on offensive put-backs. Vann finished with a game-high 15 points, while Mercy's Courtney Sabahi had 10 points.

— Jim Bucci, correspondent

Pinewood-Los Altos Hills 64, St. Joseph Notre Dame 46: The visiting Pilots (24-7) fell in their NorCal Division V game against the top-seeded Panthers (24-6). St. Joe's Desiree Harris led all players with 21 points.

— Staff

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