

## **CLASS 1A-DIVISION I GIRLS SEMIFINALS**

### **DONIPHAN WEST VS. NORWICH**

DODGE CITY – Fifty-two weeks earlier to the day, the Norwich Eagles and Olpe Eagles met on the United Wireless Arena floor in an opening quarterfinal contest of the Class 1A state tournament when 1A was still just one combined class.

On that Thursday afternoon in Game 2 of four, Olpe prevailed 59-43. In a normal year, it would have moved them to the semifinals the next day and Norwich headed home.

Later that night, though, with early signs of the COVID-19 pandemic, KSHSAA officials cancelled the remainder of the tournament's semifinals, championship and consolation games.

On Thursday, the Norwich Eagles made some amends for the year before as they survived a furious finish from first-time state attendee Doniphan West of Highland, 54-49, after Olpe earlier dispatched Hodgeman County of Jetmore, 38-21.

Those two victories set up what looms to be another historic championship game between the two Eagles. Norwich will enter the 2 p.m. Saturday title match-up with a 20-3 record while Olpe goes after its 25<sup>th</sup> win of what has been a perfect season thus far. Combined with last year's unfinished season of 25-0, the Olpe Eagles are going after consecutive win No. 50.

With the decision to not have any consolation games on Saturday, Doniphan West and Hodgeman County shared third-place trophies.

Whatever discussion was had in the locker room at halftime, it worked to the Norwich advantage as they came out firing and worked to their inside power game to Brittany Gosch, who had just 5 of those points at halftime, but Norwich went to her time and time again and she ended the quarter with 9 for a 14-point output that pulled the Eagles within two, 41-39, heading to the closing eight minutes.

The fourth quarter was a wild scramble to the finish line as the Eagles finally knotted the score at 41 just 56 seconds into the period. They would go up by five, 47-42, with 5:31 remaining only to have the Mustangs keep in close range at 49-47 with 2:38 left.

Norwich executed a semi-delay game to near perfection, closing out with a 5-2 mini-run. Free throws proved costly to the Mustangs, as they made just one basket in the final three minutes, only one free throw in the final 2:38 and missed their final six free throws 1:53. It proved too much to overcome.

Gosch finished with a game-high 20 points before fouling out with 0:56 showing on the clock. Avery Rosenhagen and Kira Kelly added 12 points each. For the Mustangs, Avery Weathersbee tallied 16 points and Chloe Clevenger chipped in with 10. Norwich finished with a narrow 29-22 rebounding advantage. In the turnover department, Norwich had 12 and Doniphan West 17. Kelly dished out 6 assists for Norwich and Clevenger 5 for the Mustangs.

From the outset, Doniphan-West played little like a first-time attendee at the state tournament semifinals.

The Mustangs jumped out to an early lead and maintained it to a 13-7 advantage after the opening quarter. Midway through the second stanza and Doniphan West was only up 16-14, but from there they would go on an 11-5 run to finish the half up 27-19.

That would set up a memorable final 16 minutes that allowed Norwich to finish off a stirring comeback and move into Saturday's title game for a chance to win their first state title since 1988.