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## **SEMIFINAL 1 RECAP**

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

#### **SOUTH GRAY HOLDS OFF NESS CITY RALLY**

DODGE CITY – It could have been billed as the Best in the West as the two most western schools geographically played in the Class 1A-Division I semifinals here Friday afternoon at United Wireless Arena.

The teams – the Ness City Eagles and the South Gray Rebels – had recent success history on their side as the Eagles had won the 2019 Class 2A state crown while the Rebels had captured the 2018 Class 1A-I title.

South Gray eventually prevailed 69-58 in a wild-and-wooly fourth quarter, but the Eagles didn't go down quietly.

What seemed like a runaway with 7:10 left in the game when the Rebels built a 56-35 lead, turned into a nail-biter until the final minute. Ness City scorched the nets with six, count 'em six, 3-point bombs to pull themselves back into the stretch run, closing to within 64-58 when 0:57 seconds showed on the clock.

It was a stunning explosion as the Eagles had managed just two through the first three periods. Dawson Stoecklein knocked down three of those en route to a team-high 15 points while sharing team-high honors with Jose Guzman and Matthew Delaney contributed 12.

For the Rebels, Aaron Skidmore paced the victory with 20 points while Brady Deges and Brent Penner each contributed 18 points. Penner might have been the biggest spark for coach Mark Applegate, who got his 725<sup>th</sup> victory in his 39<sup>th</sup> season. The 6-2 junior off the bench hit 8-of-11 field goals and he also grabbed a game-high 12 rebounds for a brilliant double-double.

The Rebels (24-0) will now advance to Saturday's 6 p.m. championship game against the later winner between No. 1-ranked Little River and Olpe. Ness City, with a mostly underclassmen roster, finished 17-8. Each of the losing two teams in the semis will share third-place trophies as KSHSAA made a decision to not have any consolation games this year due to COVID-19.

The first half started off slowly for both teams, something that seems to happen to teams when they get into the bigger arenas at state tournament time.

Ness City led early 6-3 and 10-6 before the Rebels got things unwound, using the long-range missile 3-point program with four deep ones that eventually brought them to an 18-16 lead after one quarter.

The second quarter, though, was all South Gray as the Rebels' tenacious defense created turnovers (11) that became transition baskets which created 13-3 run and a 31-19 lead. The Runnin' Rebs would finish out the half up 34-21.

Junior Brent Penner came off the bench to give the Rebels 7 important points in the second. Deges and Skidmore paced the Rebels with 11 and 10 points in that stretch.

NESS CITY (58) – Guzman 4 5-7 15, D. Guzman 1 0-0 2, Delaney 6 0-0 12, Cable 2 0-0 4, Seib 1 0-0 3, Stoecklein 5 0-0 15, Bruntz 0 2-3 2, Lopez 2 1-1 5. Totals 21 8-11 58.

SOUTH GRAY (69) -- Penner 8 1-3 18, Martin 1 0-1 2, Deges 7 2-4 18, Skidmore 8 2-4 20, Salmans 1 0-0 2, Riley 3 3-4 9. Totals 28 8-18 69.

**Ness City (17-7) 16 5 14 23 -- 58**

**South Gray (23-0) 18 16 17 18 -- 69**

3-point goals: Ness City 8 (J. Guzman 2, Seib 1, Stoecklein 5), South Gray 5 (Penner 1, Deges 2, Skidmore 2). Rebounds: Ness City 39 (Cable 11), South Gray 35 (Penner 12). Assists: Ness City 19 (Seib 6), South Gray 19 (Deges 5). Turnovers: Ness City 15, South Gray 4. Fouls: Ness City 18, South Gray 11. Fouled out: Ness City (J. Guzman, Delaney), South Gray (Martin).