

CLASS 1A-DIVISION I STATE TOURNAMENT

UNITED WIRELESS ARENA | DODGE CITY

Olpe topples No. 1-ranked Little River in Class 1A-Division I semi

DODGE CITY – Little River had come to Dodge City for the Class 1A-Division I State Tournament with the goal of completing a rare double-double by winning both the 8-Man Division I football championship last November and completing it with a basketball title at United Wireless Arena.

But somebody forgot about the Olpe Eagles, a team that had captured its own state football crown in Class 1A 11-man on the same day that Little River won its 8-man title.

Those two teams met in Friday's second semifinal and this time it was No. 3-ranked Olpe surviving a monumental battle, prevailing 75-66, to advance to Saturday's 6 p.m. championship game against another tradition-laden school in South Gray, which toppled Ness City, 69-58, in the first afternoon semifinal.

Little River ends its season at 22-2 while Olpe takes a 17-3 mark into the title game against the unbeaten Rebels (24-0).

Olpe accomplished what some might call a mini-upset, but the Eagles earned this one as they hit 30-of-48 field goals (62.5 percent) and had 24 assists on those 30 made field goals. Little River, meanwhile, struggled hitting 23-of-58 for 39.7 percent. The Eagles overcame 17 turnovers against the high-pressure Redskin defense.

Olpe led from the get-go and never trailed.

After a blitz in the first half that produced a 35-20 halftime lead for the Eagles, Little River made its first run by knocking down four 3-pointers in the third and eventually had cut what once been a 20-point deficit, 44-24, to just 10 at 52-42 with still eight minutes to play.

Every time Little River made a run at the Eagles, they responded with nifty passing and easy layups. It was a late free throw parade for Olpe as they scored their final 10 points at the line in the last 1:53 to preserve their lead. The Redskins could never get any closer than 8 on three different occasions.

Little River's all-state star Jayden Garrison did lead all scorers with 28 points, but he was 8-of-23 from the field and just 3-of-8 behind the arc. Trey Rolfs and Braxton Lafferty each contributed 13 points for coach Wayne Morrow.

For the Eagles, their big gun came from Jordan Barnard, who hit 10-of-16 field goals and finished with 24 points. Christopher Olsson followed with 16 off 8-of-10 shooting while Derek Hoelting and Damon Redeker each chipped in with 11 points. Olpe dominated the boards with a 37-22 advantage with Barnard leading that category with 8. Damon Redeker contributed 7 assists. Little River committed just 7 miscues.

Olpe came out firing on all cylinders, which was something of an understatement in the opening quarter. The Eagles drilled 8-of-9 field goals for 88.9 percent while the Redskins could muster only 3-of-9 shooting as they struggled to get into their offensive flow.

Olpe will be seeking its first state basketball crown when they take the court against South Gray, which has 4 titles to its credit.

OLPE (75) – Barnard 10 2-2 24, Bailey 2 0-1 5, Bailey 2 0-1 5, Clark 3 0-0 6, Hoelting 4 3-4 11, D. Redekeer 2 6-8 11, Skalsky 1 0-0 2, Olsson 8 0-1 16. Totals 30 11-16 75.

LITTLE RIVER (66) – Rolfs 5 3-4 13, Lafferty 5 1-4 13, Stephens 2 0-0 4, Mantz 1 0-0 3, Garrison 8 9-13 28, Konen 2 0-0 5. Totals 23 13-21 66.

Olpe (16-3) 18 17 17 23 -- 75

Little River (22-1) 8 12 22 24 -- 66

3-point goals: Olpe 4 (Barnard 2, Bailey 1, D. Redekeer 1), Little River 7 (Lafferty 2, Mantz 1, Garrison 3, Konen 1). Rebounds: Olpe 37 (Barnard 8), Little River 22 (Rolfs 7). Assists: Olpe 24 (D. Redeker 7), Little River 11 (Rolfs 4). Turnovers: Olpe 17, Little River 7. Fouls: Olpe 15, Little River 17. Fouled Out: Little River (Stephens).