



3 of 4 seeds advance in Class A

HIGH SCHOOL

MINNESOTA



By **Marc Hugunin**

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The Class A quarter-finals at Williams Arena on Thursday went almost according to Hoyle, which is to say that 3 of the 4 seeds advanced to Friday's semi-finals at Target Center. Underdogs Menahga and Stephen-Argyle were able to throw a big scare into favorites Minneota and Mountain Iron-Buhl, but only unseeded Sleepy Eye had enough tricks up its sleeve to pull an upset.

Sleepy Eye shocked #3 seed Ada-Borup 53-51. Ada had roared back from a 47-37 deficit, and even took a 52-51 lead with 32 ticks left on the clock. But Sleepy Eye guard Madi Heiderscheidt quickly answered with a layup, then a steal and a FT for the final score.

Lyle Pacelli 59 Heritage Christian 43

Only #1 seed Lyle Pacelli among the 4 favorites was able to win without being severely challenged in the final minutes. Rather, it was a case of too much Kristi Fett. Lyle Pacelli's 6-5 senior scored 25 points on 11-of-20 shooting and added 18 rebounds to lead the top-seeded A's to a 59-43 win over unseeded Heritage Christian.

Fett scored 10 quick points early in the 1st half as Heritage stayed close at 20-17. But the Eagles made just 7-of-36 shots the rest of the way, and so a serious comeback was not in the cards. Olivia Christianson added 14 points, 5 assists and 5 steals for the A's.

Taylie Scott scored 24 for Heritage with 7 boards, 2 assists and 2 steals. Scott made 6-of-17 shots, including 4-of-11 3s, and 8-of-8 FT. Her teammates made 7-of-34, 0-for-11 and 3-of-8 FT. Scott also defended Fett for the final 8 minutes of the game. "I wish I had Taylie playing her the whole time," heritage coach Lori Crellin said afterward. "She gave up a lot of height, but Fett didn't score when Taylie was guarding her." Surprisingly, the Eagles outrebounded the A's 36-34.

Heritage had tried to guard Fett man-to-man with 6-1 sophomore Jordyn Allen and weakside help, but Pacelli's Brooke Walter and Olivia Christianson threaded the needle to Fett over the top repeatedly, recording 8 and 5 assists, respectively.

Minneota 74 Menahga 69

#4 seed Minneota took what appeared to be a comfortable lead over #5 seed and previously undefeated Menahga at 50-32 at 14:41 of the 2nd half. "There's nothing you can do to prepare to play in an environment like this," said Menahga coach Cody Pulju. "Half our team has never set foot in this building, much less played on this court. So I thought that was the story of the 1st half. The environment kind of got to us, which was not unexpected. We're young."

"But the 2nd half was more indicative of how we like to play," Pulju continued. "We settled down and we showed what we're capable of." And, what they were capable of was a 33-17 run that got them within 2 at 67-65 on a 3 by Alyssa Peterson with 1:53 still on the clock.

"We knew that they were going to make a run at us," Minneota coach Chad Johnson said. "We saw them do it on tape. They run that man press and when they need to turn it up they go with the diamond press. They did a great job of getting us back on our heels for awhile. They put a lot of pressure on us on the outside. It was just good defense by them. We were also worried about their dribble penetration. They dribble the ball really hard."

But, Minneota responded with a layup and a FT each by 5-10 junior post Lydia Sussner and junior wing Lizzy Gillingham. Menahga got another basket by Peterson and a pair of FT by Annie Lake but it was not enough.

For the 1st 20 minutes, Minneota's Sussner, Gillingham and Morgan and Abby Hennen dominated with great ball movement and great movement without the ball. The result was several transition baskets, some back door cuts, some high-low. Minneota scored in a variety of ways, which is what makes them so hard to defend. At halftime Sussner, Gillingham and Morgan Hennen had 31 points, and Sussner and Abby Hennen had 8 assists.

Menahga finally got its offense going. It had taken them 40 shots to make their 1st 13 buckets. Now, they scored 13 times on their next 27 shots. Peterson was the ringleader with 24 points and 6 assists and much of that dribble penetration that coach Johnston was worried about. Megan Hendrickson also slashed to the rim and scored 19 points on 8-of-17 shooting. But other than 10 Minneota turnovers in the 2nd half, Menahga just couldn't get the defensive stops they needed. After Menahga got within 2, Minneota made 2-of-2 FG, though just 4-of-8 FT, for the win.

Sussner finished with 22 points, 9 boards and 7 assists and had several college coaches oohing and aahing. Gillingham finished at 19 and 6, and Morgan Hennen scored 18 on 7-of-8 shooting. The big 3 shot 22-of-35 for Minneota and scored 44 points in the paint.

Mountain Iron-Buhl 59 Stephen-Argyle 47

The 3rd game of the day looked a lot like the 2nd, as unseeded Stephen-Argyle stayed with #2 MIB right through 40-40 with 8:28 to play. The difference was that Stephen-Argyle slowed things down. These 2 teams took 84 shots; Menahga and Minneota took 120. The Storm took high percentage shots and made 47 percent of them, but they turned the ball over 27 times and the Rangers outscored the Storm off of turnovers 28-8.

Stephen-Argyle also had no answer for Mary Burke who scored inside and out, 26 points in all on 9-of-16 shooting, 3-of-7 3s and 5-of-6 FT, to go with 7 rebounds and 5 steals. Madisen Overbye added 14 points on 4-of-10 3-point shots. It was her 3 that gave MIB the lead for good at 43-40 and it was her layup that closed out MIB's 11-0 run to make it 51-40 at 2:28.

Autumn Thompson and Abi McGlynn were a 2-girl gang for the Storm, scoring 28 points between them on 11-of-16 shooting, and grabbing 16 rebounds. Savannah Riopelle added 12 points with 9-of-10 FT and had 7 assists. But it was MIB that made the big plays down the stretch.

Sleepy Eye 53 Ada-Borup 51

Kora Kritzberger scored 12 of Ada's 1st 14 points and the #3 seeded Cougars led 17-9 at 7:01 of the 1st half. Sleepy Eye roared back to tie at 17 as Madi Heiderscheidt scored 8 Sleepy Eye points with 4 steals and an assist. Ada shot 56 percent in the 1st half but 4 Sleepy Eye 3-pointers more than equalized things, and a Heiderscheidt 3 from just across half-court at the half-time buzzer gave Sleepy Eye a 27-25 lead.

Kritzberger and, later, Brooklyn Erickson, were able to score mostly from the area around the FT line against the Indians' matchup zone.

But Sleepy Eye slowly pulled out to a 47-37 lead at 6:36 of the 2nd half when the wheels almost came off for Sleepy Eye, or should I say the officials almost gave them lube job. 5-9 forward McKenzie Cselovski came off the Sleepy Eye bench to play a spirited game, shooting 4-of-4 FG and 3-of-3 FT, mostly in the 2nd half. Then, in a period of just 42 seconds, the Indians were called for 3 offensive fouls, and within another 4 minutes for 2 more. 5 offensive fouls in 5 minutes. 3 of them were called on Cselovski, who fouled out at 5:22 with Sleepy Eye still up 47-39.

And then at 3:39 an Ada defender lost her feet and slid under Heiderscheidt, taking her feet out and putting her on the deck. Heiderscheidt coughed up the ball as she hit the floor. No call. So now the momentum was all on Ada's side. Erickson and Mariah McKeever each scored twice and Ada finally took the lead 51-50 with just 32 seconds remaining.

But Heiderscheidt responded, in spades. She took the ensuing in-bound and roared downcourt for a layup to put Sleepy Eye back up 52-51 at 0:22. 18 seconds later she got a steal and a FT for the final margin of 53-51.

Let's be clear. This is no criticism of Ada. What were they supposed to do? Stop playing hard because the officials came offering gifts? No. But, win, lose or draw, Sleepy Eye deserved to win this game. That they won it the hard way was totally to theirs, and especially to Madi Heiderscheidt's credit. She finished with 25 points on 8-of-14 shooting plus 7-of-11 FT, plus 4 assists, 8 steals, even a blocked shot. Cselovski scored 11 and Mya Ibberson 10, including a couple of big 3s.

For Ada, Kritzberger finished with 21 points, McKeever 12 and Erickson 11.

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