



The Lyle-Pacelli girls basketball team celebrates its victory of Minneota in the Minnesota Class A state semifinals in Target Center Thursday.
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Lyle-Pacelli girls keep the faith in win over Minneota



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Published 4:52 pm Friday, March 16, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS – The No. 1 seeded Lyle-Pacelli girls basketball team went through some ups and downs, but in the end it was the faith the team has in each other that carried it through to a 53-41 win over Minneota in the Minnesota State Class A Girls Basketball Tournament semifinals in Target Center Friday.

When Kendal Truckenmiller was down and out, she came back and knocked a three-pointer to put LP up 36-30 with 9:30 left in the game and when Olivia Christianson, who had 13 points on six-of-eight shooting, fouled out with LP up 42-33 and 4:30 left in the game, she cheered her teammates from the bench as they put the win away at the foul line.

“Kendal was actually almost in tears on the bench because she let a rebound get through her hands and then they go down and bang a three. I told her that she was going to get it right back for us,” LP head coach Justin Morris said. “These kids are so confident and I love this team like I’ve never loved a basketball team in my life.”

Morris wasn't the only one feeling the love. After the game, Christianson, a sophomore post who makes a lot of plays in the wake of 6-5 senior center Kristi Fett, embraced Fett and the two shared a moment of respect.



Lyle-Pacelli's Abby Bollingberg and Minneota's Abby Hennen fight for a rebound in the Minnesota Class A state semifinals in Target Center Friday. Rocky Hulne/sports@austindailyherald.com

"She always picks me up and she just told me how proud she was of me," Christianson said of Fett. "I really love her and she always tells me before the games that she loves me and that just makes my confidence go through the roof."

Christianson was bummed to foul out late in the game, but she didn't waste any time sulking.

"I knew that my team was going to finish the deal," she said. "You just cheer like no other. I couldn't go back in the game and there was nothing I could do about it."

Fett finished with 17 points, 14 rebounds and seven blocks for LP, but she struggled early against the defense of Minneota's Lydia Sussner. Fett didn't connect on her first field goal until she scored to put LP up 14-12 with 6:52 left in the first half.

"[Sussner] is good at using her body and she knew how to get low and push me around," Fett said. "She's really good defensively. She played good defense, but I wasn't on my game. I knew I had my whole team behind me and I knew in the second half I would be OK because I had a full team behind me."

LP (31-1 overall) has struggled with its offense in the state tournament as teams have played man-to-man to limit LP's outside shooting. But the Athletics have locked down on the defensive end and they held the Vikings (26-5 overall) to 24 percent shooting from the field, while forcing nine turnovers.

Minneota started the game on an 8-2 run over the first six minutes, but from that point on it was a back and forth affair. LP charged back to take a 10-9 lead after Brooke Walter ignited the 8-1 charge with a three-pointer and drive to the hoop.

Neither team led by more than two for the rest of the first half.

Abby Bollingberg gave LP an offensive lift with 10 points, four rebounds and three assists. She made a key play early in the second half when she pulled down an offensive rebound and found Christianson for a three-pointer that put LP up 31-27.

"It's unbelievable to be part of a team like this," Bollingberg said. "Everyone on this team is so talented and getting this far is awesome. I knew we could play with anyone and beating a super good team gives us all of the confidence in the world."

LP will now play in the state title game for the first time in program history at noon Saturday in Target Center.

“It’s a dream come true. Ever since I started playing basketball it’s always been a dream,” Fett said.

Minneota 21 20 – 41

LP 22 31 – 53

LP scoring: Kristi Fett, 17; Olivia Christianson, 13; Abby Bollingberg, 10; Brooke Walter, 7; Kendal Truckenmiller, 4; Lucy Nelson, 2; field goals: 42 percent (17-for-41); three-pointers: 33 percent (3-for-9); free throws: 73 percent (16-for-22); rebounds: 36; turnovers: 11

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