



Sleepy Eye wears the glass slipper to a berth in the big dance

HIGH SCHOOL

MINNESOTA



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I'm not certain if there is even a local shoe store left in Sleepy Eye, but if there is you can be sure they carry some mighty fine glass slippers. They may need to stock up on that particular item if their girls basketball team continues its Cinderella story at the state tournament on Saturday. For the second night in a row, Sleepy Eye pulled off a stunning upset to defeat heavily-favored Mountain Iron-Buhl 63-48 in the semifinal game.

As she did on Thursday in their upset of Ada-Borup, Sleepy Eye's senior guard Madi Heiderscheidt led the underdogs to victory. Heiderscheidt dominated, especially in the stretch run when Mountain-Iron Buhl couldn't do anything to stop the girls in orange. Madi finished with 24 points, 5 rebounds and 4 assists. Senior guard Brianna Polesky was equally impressive with 18, including 12 points from beyond the three-point line, while steady-as-she-goes senior Sarah Ibarra had 13 in another solid performance.

Entering the game, MIB was the #1 team in Northstar's class 2 A poll. With a record of 29-2, they were widely expected to handle Sleepy Eye without a whole lot of difficulty. Apparently the pundits were wrong, as coach Ryan Hulke's team continued to earn the respect he felt was lacking all season.

Sleepy Eye, which has a nickname that the high school censors have somehow managed to let slide in these politically correct times, was ahead by three at the half. In the second, their three-point barrage got serious (SE was 9 for 18 on the night) led by Polesky's precise shooting from distance. That enabled the Indians to pull ahead by 10 at the midway mark of the period.

Most everyone in the arena was waiting patiently for the inevitable run from the Rangers, who always seem to come up with some big stops and big baskets when they are desperately needed. On this night, however, that run never came as MIB's core group of Mary Burke, Allie Negen, Macy Savela and Madisen Overbye could not crack the Sleepy Eye code. The Rangers were done in by too many turnovers and missed opportunities, as well as a motivated group of Sleepy Eye defenders. As the clock ticked down, it became obvious that Cinderella was on her way to the big dance and MIB would go home disappointed.

Burke, a Minnesota-Crookston recruit, ended her outstanding senior season with a 15-point night while Savela, Negen and Overbye had 10 apiece. Sleepy Eye, ranked #9 in class A, will meet #1-ranked Lyle-Pacelli in Saturday's championship game at noon.

Lyle-Pacelli 53 Minneota 41

Lyle-Pacelli coach Justin Morris is an excitable guy who prances up and down the sidelines in animated splendor on a regular basis. He was particularly buoyant on Friday afternoon at Target Center as his team turned in an outstanding second-half performance to bounce Minneota from the state tournament by a score of 53-41. The Athletics will now face Sleepy Eye for the title. "We just grinded it out possession by possession," Morris said in the post-game press conference. "That is championship basketball."

The #1-ranked Athletics certainly looked like championship material on Friday. They took a little different approach than usual, however, as 6'5 post Kristi Fett found herself closely guarded for most of the night by Minneota's all-state forward Lydia Sussner. Despite giving away about half a foot in height, Sussner gave Fett fits. Fortunately, Lyle-Pacelli can also shoot it from the outside and that's

exactly what they did, not just from three-point range but from just about everywhere you can cash in for two. Sophomore guard Olivia Christianson was 6 for 8 for 13 points. Abigail Bollingberg, a 5'5 junior guard, was 3/5 from two for 10 points. Senior guard Brooke Walter had 8 assists and 7 points. As for Fett, who routinely puts up 20-30 per game, she finished with 17 in addition to her 14 rebounds and 7 blocks.

Lyle-Pacelli's lead was just three halfway through the second period before senior guard Kendel Truckenmiller made a three that was quickly followed by a pair of Bollingberg free throws and a Fett basket in the paint. That put the Athletics up by 10. Minneota's outstanding freshman Abby Hennen, who was 15 and 8 on the night, fouled out shortly thereafter making the prospect of a Vikings comeback much less likely. Lyle-Pacelli was incredibly patient in the closing moments – engaging in that grind-it-out basketball Morris was talking about – as they scored 10 more points in the final three minutes to seal the deal.

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