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Minneota's Lydia Sussner fought 6-5 Kristi Fett of Lyle-Pacelli, but it ended up being a losing battle and the Athletics won, 53-41. Lizzy Gillingham also fought for the ball against the 6-5 Fett.

TOO MUCH BIG GAL FOR VIKINGS

Sat, 03/17/2018 - 9:28am admin

•Lyle-Pacelli's 6-5 Kristi Fett dominates Vikings. Minneota thrust into third place game.

BY: BYRON HIGGIN MASCOT SPORTS EDITOR Lydia Sussner sat down after the game looking exhausted.

"I am exhausted," she said.

"Lydia is very frustrated about her her offense," said Coach Chad Johnston. "But in all fairness, she played a great game against a very tough opponent.

Sussner had been the center of Coach Johnston's plan to attack the all-stater Kristi Fett. So he'd designed a plan to send his all-stater, Sussner, into the path of Fett.

But try as she may to stop her and to get past her on offense, Fett's influence on the game was just too much and Lyle Pacelli took a 53-41 win to send the Vikings into Saturday's third place game.

They will play *Mt. Iron-Buhl*, a 63-48 loser to *Sleepy Eye* at 11 a.m. at *Concordia College* in *St. Paul*.

Sleepy Eye will play Lyle-Pacelli for the state championship.

Minneota trailed just 22-21 at the half in a low-scoring, methodical game that controlled by Fett's presence. It wasn't so much her scoring, which totaled 17 points, or even her rebounding, but just the fact that she became a presence in the middle that was just hard to negotiate against.

"We did a wonderful job defending," Coach Johnston said. "But Fett is an impressive player," he added.

"She frustrated Lydia, but I think Lydia also did a good job on her defensively," the coach added.

The idea was to go directly at Fett, wear her out and make her defend.

"They were very well aware of who Lydia was. Lydia tried to get a hand up on her but it was just physically exhausting."

Minneota, MN

Weather

Wind

Rain

Sun

37.4 °F

Mostly Cloudy

SSW Wind
9.2mph

27 °F 40 °F

29 43
THU29 37
FRI27 37
SAT27 40
SUN

2:46 PM Wed Mar 21

WillyWeather

He'd also hoped to push the ball up the court and get Fett caught in "the transition," but said, "We didn't do a very good job of that. As the game went on they kept changing gears on us," he said.

Despite Fett, what did Minneota in was a period of time in the second half when they didn't score. Lyle-Pacelli went from a 31-30 lead to a 40-30 advantage before Lizzy Gillingham hit a free throw. That was a nine-point run for the Athletics and about a five-minute span when the Vikings didn't score.

Despite a Viking press, they couldn't get any closer than 48-41 and Minneota had to resort to fouls. Lyle-Pacelli was solid at the free throw line, hitting 15 of 19 in the second half alone. Fett sank seven of eight from the charity stripe.

Minneota was also cols shooting — some attributed to Fett in the middle. She shot just 24 percent for the game and 17 percent from three-point land.

"We simply won more possessions than they did," said Lyle-Pacelli Coach Justin Morris.

"We kinda stopped their running game," he added.

Morris said, "We're incredibly excited," to be playing in the state championship.

As for Coach Johnston, he was philosophical. "This is a great team," he said about Lyle-Pacelli. Then he stopped and added, "We still have an opportunity to finish with a win," as he pointed to Saturday's third place game.

Abby Hennen's 15 led Minneota with Sussner scoring 11, Lizzy Gillingham seven; Morgan Hennen (who eventually fouled out trying to help guard Fett) five and Morgan Kockelman three. Abby Hennen had eight rebounds and Sussner seven. But Fett had 14 rebounds and seven blocks as she used her 6-5 frame to swat the ball away on numerous occasions.

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