

Marion squeezes into 3A substate final

Written by Jim Ecker

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Dusty Albaugh and Kasey Semler got a taste of the Class 3A boys state basketball tournament in 2009 when they were sophomores. Now they want a full meal.

They could get it Monday night.

Albaugh scored 17 points Thursday night as Marion slipped by Mount Vernon, 38-37, in the Class 3A district finals on a neutral court at Kennedy High School.

Marion (16-7) will face Benton (16-7) in the substate finals Monday at 8 p.m. at the U.S. Cellular Center for the right to play in the state tournament in Des Moines from March 8-12.

"It's a goal of ours to get back to state," said Albaugh, who made five 3-pointers Thursday. "Kasey and I and Tyler (Fisher), we know what that was like. We want another taste of that."

The Indians lost to Carroll by one point in the first round of the 2009 state tournament.

Marion and Benton split two games in the Wamac Conference this season. Benton won the first meeting, 57-56, but the Indians drilled the Bobcats by 21 points, 61-40, when they met Feb. 8.

The Indians have Des Moines on their minds. They want another trip to Wells Fargo Arena.

"More than anything," said Semler. "It's all I'm thinking about. That, and school."

Semler had an off-night Thursday with 10 points. He had more turnovers than field goals and hardly looked like the same guy who leads all Class 3A scorers at 22.4 per game.

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"Not a very good performance personally," he said. "I'll be honest with you."

The Indians grabbed the victory and went home. "Win and move on at this point," said Coach Mike Manderscheid, feeling no need to be picky or critical.

Mount Vernon (15-8) had a chance to win the game at the buzzer, but Henok Russell missed a shot from the corner and Albaugh snared the rebound.

"I grabbed onto that thing as hard as I could," said Albaugh. "I heard that buzzer go off and I knew it was time to celebrate."

The Indians are looking forward to Monday night's game in downtown Cedar Rapids. "It's going to be insane," said Albaugh.

"It will be exciting," said Semler. "I know we're ready to go."

Dubuque Wahlert will face Solon in the first game Monday at the U.S. Cellular Center in another 3A substate final at 6:30.

Henok Russell led Mount Vernon with 10 points. Micah Russell and Jack Keleher scored nine points apiece for the Mustangs.

MARION (38): Cronk 2 0-0 4, Semler 3 2-2 10, Fisher 0 0-0 0, Van Gorp 2 0-0 4, Albaugh 6 0-0 17, Stone 1 0-1 2, Hardman 0 1-2 1, Wagner 0 0-0 0. Totals 14 3-5 38.

MOUNT VERNON (37): M. Russell 3 2-2 9, Timm 2 0-0 5, Keleher 4 1-3 9, H.Russell 4 0-2 10,

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Leopold 1 0-0 2, Tuebel 0 0-0 0, Parker 0 0-0 0, Shaffer 1 0-0 2. Totals 15 3-7 37.

Halftime -- Mount Vernon 22, Marion 16. 3-point goals -- Marion 7 (Albaugh 5, Semler 2), Mount Vernon 4 (H. Russell 2, M. Russell, Timm).