

Wash ousted by hot-shooting Rams

Written by Tom Fruehling

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The Washington girls' storybook basketball season ended Tuesday night because they were less than perfect.

With Southeast Polk shooting the lights out at the Prairie gym in the Class 5A regional final, perfection would have been the only way for the Warriors to win.

They fell short, 79-71, but only because the other girls hardly missed.

"We didn't lose due to a shortage of point production or lack of effort," said Washington Coach Frank Howell. "We lost to a great team that played exceptionally well. They just outscored us."

Counting free throws, the Class 5A ninth-ranked Rams (16-6) took 65 shots and made 42 of them.

Even more remarkable, the laser-like shooters sank 14 of 23 from 3-point range (61 percent). They were slightly less effective from short range, hitting nine of 18 (50 percent).

Nursing an 18-point lead into the fourth quarter, they milked the clock and tried just one field goal. But they made 14 of 16 free throws down the stretch (and 19 of 24 for the night).

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"They were unconscious," said Warrior senior point guard Jasmyne Jones. "We did everything we could to stop them. But none of them missed. It was their night."

Eighth-ranked Washington (18-5) was slow to get out of the gate, which was a nemesis all year. Against the Southeast Polk gunslingers, it was deadly.

Ram sophomore Abby Penquite swished three straight wide open treys in the first two minutes as the Des Moines-area visitors jumped out to 9-2 lead. They made 10 of 14 3-point attempts in the first half alone.

Their lead at the intermission was only 39-30 because rock solid Warrior senior Aleena Hobbs refused to let her team get run over.



"We came up short," said the hard-working, versatile Hobbs, whose 18 points shared team scoring honors with senior running mate Dani Franklin. "But when we got way behind, we stepped up."

As Abby Penquite and her senior sister Annie continued to drain threes, the Rams built a 20-point lead with a couple of minutes to go in the third quarter.

The indefatigable Franklin and junior cruncher Kandis O'Donnell (who ended up with 14 points) got hot, however, and helped whittle the deficit down to six.

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"We put ourselves in a position to make a run," said Howell. "We were hoping they (Southeast Polk) would miss free throws. But they didn't."

Defending champion Southeast Polk now advances to the state tournament.

The Warriors, meanwhile, miss out on making their seventh appearance in the last 10 years and third in the past four.

"A lot of people doubted us at the start of the year," said Franklin, who leads Class 5A in scoring at 22.5 points per game. "But we won our conference title. It's been a great season."

SOUTHEAST POLK (79): Shelby Uhl 0 0-0 0, Jacey Huinker 2 3-5 7, Jessica Cole 6 6-7 20, Abby Penquite 6 6-6 24, Allee Ira 5 0-0 13, Sierra Mitchell 1 0-0 3, Anna Zelenovich 0 0-0 0, Annie Penquite 3 4-6 12. Totals 23 19-24 79.

WASHINGTON (71): Aleena Hobbs 7 4-4 18, Dani Franklin 8 1-2 18, Kandis O'Donnell 6 2-2 14, Jasmyne Jones 0 1-2 1, Kiki West-Doyle 3 1-2 8, Sophie Ochs 0 0-0 0, MJ Kamin 0 0-0 0, Anne Visser 0 0-0 0, Callie Cook 3 1-3 7, Courtney Squires 0 0-0 0, Joniqua Clark 1 1-2 3, Lily Hartman 1 0-0 2, Allie Semrau 0 0-0 0. Totals 29 11-17 71.

Halftime – Southeast Polk 39, Washington 30. 3-point goals – Southeast Polk 14 (Ab. Penquite 6, Ira 3, Cole 2, An. Penquite 2, Mitchell 1), Washington 2 (Franklin 1, West-Doyle 1). Total fouls – Southeast Polk 17, Washington 20. Fouled out – None.