

Lady Eagles roll past Mesa Vista in Class 2A first round

By Christopher Smith The Daily Times

Posted: 03/06/2010 12:00:00 AM MST
FARMINGTON — The defending 2A champions breezed into the quarterfinals Friday.

Navajo Prep (17-11) thrashed Mesa Vista, 82-49, at The Eagles Nest.

Ranked No. 10, the Lady Eagles withstood a volatile season to win District 2-2A and positioned themselves for Albuquerque with a well-rounded effort.

"This is exactly what it's gonna take for us to be back at that championship game. To have all 12 players ready to play, mentally prepared," coach Rainy Crisp said. "We haven't had a game like this where all of us are clicking on the same page. If we can take this into next week, I think we'll have a good run at it."

Tianna Smith led Prep with 10 points but 10 other players scored at least five.

Heather Rogers, the only Eagle that didn't score, finished with seven rebounds.

Prep broke open a four-point game in the final minute of the first half, which culminated with a halfcourt bank shot from Latawnya McCray that created bedlam in the bleachers and generated a 38-29 lead for the Eagles.

A Carmelita Trujillo 3-pointer cut the lead to 40-34

with 6:23 left in the third quarter before Prep's defense shut down the Lady Trojans, outscoring them 42-15 the rest of the game.

The defense keyed on Julia Martinez, who scored 11 points and grabbed eight rebounds in the first half, and Crystal Martinez, who sunk two early 3s.

"Once we did that we took away their halfcourt offense where they had to maybe force some things or turn over the ball, and we started converting on those turnovers," Crisp said. "Either that or we boxed out very well."

Prep outrebounded Mesa Vista, 32-14, during the second half and rotated its bench frequently.

The Eagles did finish with 28 turnovers, three fewer than the Trojans.

"We'd turn the ball over and make it up on the other side of the court," senior point guard Bridget Becenti said. Becenti scored five points and had four assists.

Prep forced Mesa Vista to shoot 24.3 percent during the second half including 1-for-12 from the 3-point line.

Nicole Yazzie led the Eagles with nine points, 10 rebounds and three assists.

"We just really all came together and we played our best," Yazzie said. "It feels really good. I'm ready to go back to state and I know the team is."

"We're just really hyped up. I hope that we can give (our fans) a good show."

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THE DAILY TIMES FARMINGTON NEW MEXICO

The Eagles talked after the game about maintaining enthusiasm on the bench by providing vocal encouragement to the players on the court, which they maintained in turn once the roles reversed.

Nakisha Antonio, a sophomore guard that didn't record a stat in the first half, scored nine points and grabbed four rebounds before the game ended.

"I really do believe that if we come out like this and play three more games like this then we have a chance at that blue trophy," Crisp said. "We were really up and down all season. We're ranked No. 10. That's kind of a first for Navajo Prep. The way they came out tonight, they showed they're state championship quality."

The New Mexico Activities Association will release the 2A championship bracket Sunday.

The Eagles will play Tuesday at the Santa Ana Star Center in Rio Rancho. The state championship game would be 4 p.m. Friday at The Pit in Albuquerque.

Navajo Prep 82, Mesa Vista 49

Mesa Vista 15 14 11 9 — 49

Navajo Prep 20 18 14 30 — 82

MV — Samantha Giron 3, Muriah Dean 4, Crystal Martinez 9, Carmelita Trujillo 20, Julia Martinez 13.

NP (17-11) — Bridget Becenti 5, Alexis Archambault 8, Latawnya McCray 8, Nicole Yazzie 9, Tianna Smith 10, Brianna Kee 9, Lani Padilla 5, Danielle Coleman 6, Jamie Sagg 7, Sasha Joe 6, Nakisha Antonio 9.

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