

# Third At State

## Mulvane Quickness Pays Dividends In 4A Showcase

By Mike Robinson

**SALINA**--The season could have ended with a whimper but there were nine seniors who felt they deserved better.

Mulvane High School, making its third appearance in the last four years in the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) Class 4A State Basketball Tournament, instead roared to third place Saturday afternoon, March 14, by blistering highly-rated Abilene, 72-65, at the Salina Bicentennial Center.

Later that day, Topeka Hayden snapped Atchison's string of two straight 4A championships by nipping the Redmen, 37-33, for the 4A state title.

Hayden had sent Mulvane's state championship dreams sprawling a day earlier with a stunning 71-44 beating in the semifinals. Atchison followed by knocking off Abilene, 61-51.

In opening round play Thursday, March 12, Hayden upset No. 1 seeded Colby, 37-36. Mulvane powered past Haven, 63-58. Abilene dumped DeSoto, 93-74, and Atchison clobbered Baxter Springs, 78-55.

"Those kids really bounced back," said Mulvane High School coach Charlie Mason after the sparkling effort to claim third place by the Wildcats. "They realized they didn't have a good effort yesterday (against Hayden) and with nine seniors on the squad, they decided they didn't want it to end that way. It was a good, solid effort, a lot like our first ball game and a lot like we've played the last part of the season. We have never been able to do it with one or two players. I'm just real proud of these guys. They've got a lot of heart. They don't know how to lose."

Thus, the senior season ended for nine Wildcats on a high and a 20-6 season, nine who reached the state tournament two straight years.

In the battle for third place, Mulvane stuffed Abilene more easily than the score, handing the Cowboys their fourth loss of the year in 25 games. The Cats came out attacking and built up a small lead quickly and held it the entire first half. They broke the game open in the third quarter, out-scoring Abilene, 21-14, then walked out to a huge lead, 68-50, before Mason cleared his bench in the first four minutes of the final period.

"Andrew (Swayne) comes to mind when you start talking about good ball games," said Mason. "He had an outstanding game." He finished with a team-high 23 points and 12 rebounds against the Cowboys.

Senior guard Curtis Hicks scored 13 points and forward Todd Fox connected for 15 and 13 rebounds while Kyle Steadman finished with nine points. The fifth starter, Morgan LeClair, was hampered by a leg injury sustained in the semifinal battle but still scored six points and had 10 rebounds.

"In the second half, we just wore them down and got more aggressive on the 1-3-1 trap defense," pointed out

### CLASS 4A STATE TOURNAMENT AT SALINA BICENTENNIAL CENTER

**Third Place**  
Abilene 11 18 14 23-65  
Mulvane 16 15 21 20-72  
Abilene--Mark Willey 10, Brad Chindamo 11, Scott Russell 3, Kelly Kranger 6, Matt Whitehair 4, Craig Gantleben 9, Roger Stirtz 9, Jon Stebert 7, Brian Holmes 6. FG 24-69, FT 17-31, F 23.  
Mulvane--Kyle Steadman 9, Todd Fox 15, Andrew Swayne 23, Morgan LeClair 6, Curtis Hicks 13, Huey Nelson 2, Bryson Butts 2, Shay Cornejo 2. FG 27-64, FT 18-30, F 24.

**Championship**  
Topeka Hayden 37, Atchison 33  
**Semifinals**  
Mulvane 8 11 8 17-44  
Topeka Hayden 19 22 9 21-71  
Mulvane--Kyle Steadman 2, Todd Fox 16, Andrew Swayne 0, Morgan LeClair 0, Curtis Hicks 10, Shay Cornejo 9, Huey Nelson 2, Neal Hamilton 2, Lyle Graybeal 1, Bryson Butts 2. FG 15-42, FT 14-18, F 25.  
Topeka Hayden--Paul Reilly 22, Jim Spence 4, Tom Jaramillo 7, Tim Harrison 10, John Schwartz 8, Scott Kenagy 2, Alex Brickner 7, Chris Waldenbach 4, Jeff Bessette 2, Tom Rangel 5. FG 25-42, FT 21-28, F 71.

**First Round**  
Mulvane 18 14 14 17-43  
Haven 9 18 14 17-58  
Mulvane--Kyle Steadman 2, Todd Fox 13, Andrew Swayne 6, Morgan LeClair 22, Curtis Hicks 14, Shay Cornejo 4, Jeff Williams 2. FG 22-65, FT 19-29, F 18.  
Haven--Vance Voth 5, Gerry Dickey 15, Greg Wilkinson 4, Steve Cartwright 4, Tod Bernard 20. FG 25-55, FT 8-18, F 22.  
Topeka Hayden 37, Colby 36  
Abilene 83, DeSoto 74  
Atchison 78, Baxter Springs 55



Mason. "We also used a 2-3 trap and kept them off-balance."

Mason said he felt quickness was the critical factor, much as it was in all three Mulvane games. The Cats were smaller but quicker than both Abilene and Haven. "Abilene wasn't as quick as Hayden and we were able to run our offense because we were quicker," stated the Cat coach. "Yesterday (against Hayden) we weren't able to get the ball inside for the better shots because Hayden was quicker."

A quick look at the scoring tells the story. Mulvane's inside game, severely hampered anyway by leg injuries to both LeClair and Fox, was curtailed by the quicker Topeka team. Consequently, Swayne didn't score and neither did LeClair. Fox provided the only inside scoring with 16 points. Guards Hicks and reserve Shay Cornejo with 10 and nine points, respectively, were the only other Wildcats with more than a bucket.

Against Abilene, it was business as usual for the Cats. "We felt like we could play our game because of the quickness factor," stressed Mason. "I didn't even stay and watch the Abilene-Atchison semifinal. I wanted to get everybody away from it for a while so we went to watch movies. Anyway, I didn't think it was going to make any difference because we were going to have to do what we're capable of doing." And that means pressure defense and run with the basketball.

Hayden simply took that away with superior quickness, causing the wheels to come off in the first half when Mulvane shot only 27% from the field and Hayden was hitting 74% by beating Mulvane's pressure defense deep. By intermission, the game was history as Hayden built up a 41-19 lead. Mulvane was never able to get the margin under 20.

Hayden chief Ben Meseke agreed. "Our kids played an outstanding game and played well as a team," said Meseke, whose team hit their first seven shots to jump ahead almost immediately. "We wanted to get out early because we knew Mulvane could get up and go with us. We did have one of our best shooting nights of the season."

Overall, the Topeka team hit 60% from the field for the game after making 14 of 19 fielders and 13 of 14 from the stripe in the first half. In contrast, the Wildcats made only six of 22 field attempts in the first half and finished with a 36% night (15 of 42).

"I don't think you can give Topeka Hayden enough credit," said Mason. "They caught Colby on a cold night and they caught us on a cold night. You have to start feeling like they're causing some of that."

Mulvane opened the tournament facing one of the toughest players in Kansas, 6-5 junior Tod Bernard, who had scored 16 points as a freshman to help keep Mulvane from seeing the Salina lights four years in a row when Haven bumped off Mulvane in the 1985 sub-state championship game. A three-foot first four minutes of the game for Bernard kept him from being the factor that he may have been. Bernard committed his third foul of the game at the 4:54 mark in the first quarter and sat out the rest of the quarter.

That gave the Wildcats an opportunity to jump out to an 18-9 lead and forced Haven coach Mike Fast to play Bernard before Mulvane had total control of the game. He finished with a one-game tournament high of 30 points, including 20 in the second half as Haven regained the lead early in the fourth quarter after

a four minute stretch where Mulvane committed 10 turnovers.

Hayden actually held a three-point lead (56-53) and had the ball with 2:12 left in the game but refused to sit on it.

"We didn't feel like we could with Mulvane's quickness and the way we have been shooting free throws," emphasized Fast. "We've been hitting only 50% from the free throw stripe and when you can't hit your free throws and can't hold onto the ball against superior quickness, you don't feel like trying to stall. If we could have gotten the lead to five, I probably would have but we never could get it up another two points."

A bucket by Swayne made it only a one-point game at 56-55 and after each team traded missing free throws, LeClair put Mulvane back ahead, 57-56, with a pair of freebees after he was fouled on a rebound. Another turnover by Haven led to Cornejo hitting two free throws. Bernard hit a jumper before Hicks was intentionally fouled and made one of two with nine seconds left to give Mulvane a 60-58 lead and the ball. Hicks was fouled again, hitting one of two at the line before LeClair nailed it tight with two free throws with one second left.

Mulvane presented a balanced scoring assault against Haven with LeClair having his best game, 22 points. Hicks finished with 14 points, Fox scored 13 and Swayne, who had 13 rebounds, scoring six.

## Fox No. 2 Scorer In 4A State Meet

By Mike Robinson

**SALINA**--Mulvane High School and Topeka-Hayden aren't strangers when it comes to the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) State Basketball Tournament. In the 1984 championship game, Mulvane slapped Hayden's Wildcats around for the championship, 64-50.

"I remember that team," said Hayden coach Ben Meseke. "That was an outstanding Mulvane team. They had a lot more talent, I think, than this year's (Mulvane) team but one thing you can say about Mulvane this year is that they are battlers."

Hayden humbled the Mulvane Wildcats in a semifinal game, 71-44, then went on to claim the 4A state championship in the finale by upsetting Atchison, 37-33. Meseke's Wildcats came into the tournament as the No. 8 seed with the worst record in the field (15-8) but their quickness, depth and defense played havoc with the field.

Speaking of defense, Hayden gave up only an average of 37.7 points a game in taking the championship. Mulvane's 44 points scored against Hayden was the lowest Mulvane scoring total of the year by nine points (the Cats scored 53 points against both Pratt and Augusta). In fact, you have to go back to the 1981-82 season to find a lower one-game score for the Cats. They were held to 38 points that year in the finals of the Chaparral Roadrunner Classic by Pratt.

The tournament's leading scorer for the boys division was Atchison's Cougar Downing, a junior, who scored 50 points. Mulvane's Todd Fox, a sensation on Mulvane's one-game stay in last year's tournament with a 35-point burst, finished second with 44 points. Par Downing of Atchison and Hayden's



Mulvane's Morgan LeClair [42] soars to block a shot as Andrew Swayne [40] and Kyle Steadman [34] close in against Abilene

Tim Harrison both scored 42 points. Mulvane senior Curtis Hicks finished with 37 points and was the No. 6 tournament scorer for three games.

Former Mulvane assistant coach Dennis Tegethoff was attending the Bicentennial showcase but only as a spectator. Now coaching the Holton boys, Tegethoff was at the 4A state meet to cheer on the Holton girls, who finished third in the state after getting bombed by Rose Hill in the semifinals, 61-46.

Tegethoff's first year at Holton was a good one (16-7) but the Holton team lost out to Atchison in the sub-state championship game, 56-29. "Atchison had too much quickness for us," said Tegethoff, who was an assistant under Mulvane's Charlie Mason for several years before striking out on his own. "That's one of the differences between teams down around Mulvane and teams in our league, the Big Seven League. There seems to be more size up here and less quickness."

Tegethoff said his Holton Wildcats tied for the loop title with Nemaha Valley and that there were about five good teams in the league--Holton, Nemaha Valley, Royal Valley, Jefferson County West and Sabetha.

Tegethoff would have loved to make the eight-team field at Salina so that he could have gone up against his old boss Mason. "That would have been the great 'tux battle' because we would have been wearing tuxedos, too," noted Tegethoff.

Headline writers around the state would have had a ball with that one.

By finishing third, Mulvane's Wildcats racked up another 20-victory season for Mason and have added to what has

been a great "run" by Mulvane basketballers.

Starting with winning the 4A state championship in 1984, Mulvane has been a state-wide force in basketball. The Wildcats were third this year, went to the state tourney but were eliminated in the first round in 1986 and got beat in the sub-state championship game in 1985.

Haven had the tallest starting frontline in the tournament field with 6-foot, 5-inch Tod Bernard, 6-4 Steve Cartwright and 6-3 Gerry Dickey but the quickness and ballhandling at the guard positions proved to be a disaster for the Mid-Kansas League team. Mulvane forced Haven into 29 turnovers, one of the keys to Mulvane's victory in the opening round.

Another key was the quickest three fouls on one player probably in tourney history. Bernard fouled three times in the first three minutes of the game against Mulvane, his third coming at 4:54 mark, sending him to the bench for the rest of the quarter.

Four boys teams of Wildcats and two Wildcats girls teams were in the "Elite Eight" in their respective divisions.

There were the Hayden Wildcats, the Haven Wildcats, the DeSoto Wildcats and Mulvane's Wildcats playing in the boys division. Hayden and Holton were the two Wildcats in the girls championship.

Another tournament oddity found three schools qualifying both their boys and girls teams for the "Elite Eight." Schools having two teams qualify were Baxter Springs, Topeka Hayden and Colby.

The 4A boys tournament featured the last five 4A state champs among the eight teams in the field. Hayden won the title in 1982 and 1983, Mulvane won it in 1984 and Atchison was back-to-back winner in 1985 and 1986. Chic Downing, Atchison's head coach, had his Redmen in the state tourney for the eighth time in his 13 years.

On the flip side, DeSoto was making its first state tournament appearance since 1946.