

Scrappy Wildcat Girls Stopped Short

If winning is attitude, the Mulvane High School girls had an attitude Friday night, March 7, in the semifinals of the Augusta Class 4A Girls Sub-State.

The Wildcats played the game of the season and nearly pulled off the improbably, but in the end, Andale got the last shot.

It went in.

Andale will be representing the Chisholm Trail League in the Girls Class 4A State Championship this weekend. The Indians' dropped through a baseline jumper with five seconds left to come from behind to conquer the Wildcats for the fourth time this season in a 64-63 game.

The next night, Andale blasted Rose Hill in the championship game, 53-42, earning the sub-state girls' crown.

"I thought we did everything we needed

to do to win, it just didn't go our way in the very end," said second-year MHS girls coach Kelly Dennis. "We had to shoot the ball well and we did. We had to come out and make a lot of shots and we did. I also felt like we needed to rebound with them and we did. And I thought we had to get a shot nearly every time down the floor and we did."

The only "didn't" in there was that Mulvane didn't win, although Dennis and her troops played a marvelous game. Two of the three earlier losses to the Indians were runaways. Andale hummed along against the Cats, 53-33, in Andale just three weeks ago and in the first game of 1997, Andale smothered Mulvane's girls, 54-40.

It was a different story, though, Friday night as the Wildcats out-played Andale,

and if the game had been another five seconds longer, the Cats would have won. It was a game where the last shooter wins and Andale was the last shooter. Actually, it was Christine Gorges, who threw in a leaning seven-footer on the baseline after Mulvane's Crissy Carpenter had put the Wildcats up, 63-62, with 12 ticks left.

In earlier encounters, Andale's "physicalness" had battered the Cats. The Indians quickness caused uncertainty and Mulvane turnovers and the shooting went south with the confidence.

"I honestly felt if we didn't come out and make a good percentage of shots, we had no chance of winning but we shot the ball right along with them," said Dennis. "They've always beat us up on the boards and controlled them but we didn't let that happen this time. We got physical with them. And we also didn't have a bunch of turnovers. We knew we had to do a lot of things differently to beat them and we did that, but it came down to the last shot."

The Wildcats held their own on the boards with the Cats grabbing 28 boards and Andale grabbing 28. Carpenter pulled away six boards, Shelley Richards had five and both junior Melissa Buchanan and sophomore Kristen Buchanan getting four apiece. And the Cats hit 57% from the field (24 of 42) and the Indians connected 49% of the time (25 of 51). And the Cats may have had 18 turnovers, but Andale finished with 15.

"You hate to end the season with a loss, but there are only two teams in each class that end it on a winning note, and that's the state champions," added Dennis. "I thought our girls played a great ball game. They played their hearts out, and I couldn't have been more happy about it even if we did end the year with a loss. We were focused the whole game and we executed better than we have in our other games. We ran about every play to a 'T' and there were five or six times, we ran through the offense twice to get the shot we wanted, so the girls were really focused. I think 90% of winning is attitude, and I think we developed some of that Friday night. Sometimes, a loss like that can be the best motivation, especially heading into an off-season."

It was uphill most of the game for Mulvane, although they hung right in there with Andale, which is taking a 17-6 record into the state shootout. The Indians jumped the Cats early in the third quarter, working a six-point halftime spread to 12 points, but the Wildcats wouldn't back off and got it back to within six before Andale unleashed a rain of threes. They made three straight late in the quarter and four of five from behind the three-point line.

Each time, however, Mulvane charged back more determined than ever and started taking charge with about 6:40 left in the game when Richards slipped through a three-pointer that left the Cats trailing by

only three, 57-54. Senior Dannelle Hughes hit a bucket to make it a 57-56 deficit and Buchanan silenced the Andale crowd by hitting a jumper to give Mulvane its first lead, 58-57, with little more than three minutes to play. After trading free throws, Buchanan picked up her fifth foul.

With 58 seconds left, Carpenter hit from the key to put Mulvane ahead, 61-60 but less than 10 seconds later, Hughes picked up her fifth foul.

The Cats still didn't quit with their top two frontliners on the bench. After the Indians hit two free throws to regain the lead, Carpenter did it again with 12 seconds left, to give the raving Mulvane crowd hope for a trip to Salina.

But Andale raced down the floor and found Gorges on the baseline for a short jumper. Lindsay Kendrick's hurried shot at the head of the key fell off as the gun sounded.

"If you want to talk about character, I think we answered them every time," confessed the MHS coach. "There's nothing better than having a senior answer. Crissy was awesome. Her leadership was great. I've never seen her focused like that this year. I think if we would have had another five seconds, we would have won that game. The last thing we said after we broke the huddle is to make sure we got a shot off. We got one off but we couldn't get in range because of time."

Carpenter finished with a 15-point night and Hughes, who carried the load early, topped Mulvane with 16 points. Kendrick was in double figures with 10 points and Richards and Melissa Buchanan scored eight points apiece.

"I thought it was going to be our night," said Dennis. "We played with discipline. we got excellent shots every time down the floor. We may not have made the shots but we got excellent looks every time on offense. When you put yourself in position to win, you have a good shot at winning."

The loss ended Dennis' second year at 12-10, not bad for a team that won three games a year ago.

Augusta Class 4A Girls Sub-State Results

SEMIFINALS

Mulvane 12 18 18 15-63
Andale 16 20 21 7-64
Mulvane - Crissy Carpenter 13, Dannelle Hughes 15, Melissa Buchanan 8, Shelley Richards 8, Lindsay Kendrick 10, Michelle Fowler 2, Kristen Buchanan 4, Ashley McCoskey 1, Victoria Padilla 2. FG 24 (3), FT 12-17, F 16.

Andale - Christine Gorges 6, Maggie Eck 16, Missi Eck 26, Betsy Eck 8, Emmy Horich 6, Stacey Eck 2. FG 24 (8), FT 8-17, F 15.

Rose Hill 58, Circle 41

CHAMPIONSHIP

Andale 53, Rose Hill 42

FIRST ROUND GAMES

Mulvane 61, Clearwater 57

Andale 54, Chaparral 30

Rose Hill 71, Augusta 22

Circle 57, Kingman 41



Senior Dannelle Hughes (32) goes over Andale defender in sub-state for two



Cat Crissy Carpenter (21) looks for an opening against Andale