

Civic Memorial, Troeckler roll into sectional final



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HIGHLAND • Maybe Civic Memorial girls basketball coach Jonathan Denney was right.

Ignorance is bliss.

Denney believes his team is so young that it is oblivious to the pressure of the post season.

"A lot of them have no clue how important these games are," he said after the Eagles used a second-half push to blow past Salem 55-46 in the semifinals of the Class 3A Highland Sectional on Monday.

CM (26-6) won its seventh game in a row and will face Massac County (20-8) in the sectional final at 7 p.m. Thursday.

Sophomore Allie Troeckler led the kiddie corps on Monday with 26 points and 10 rebounds. Freshman Alaria Tyus added 11 points.

The Eagles lost all five starters from last year's team, which won a school-record 31 games before losing to Quincy Notre Dame in a super-sectional contest. This time around, they start two juniors, two sophomores and a freshman.

Troeckler is the only returning player with even a hint of experience from last season's squad.

"Last year, I didn't fully grasp what was happening," Troeckler said. "I feel like the younger girls are like that this year."

Tyus, the lone freshman starter, agrees with that theory.

"Sometimes it's better not think about (the pressure)," she said.

The Eagles looked like a group of poised, calm veterans in the second half against Salem (22-10), which beat CM 48-39 on Nov. 22.

They fashioned a nifty 8-2 run over the first four minutes of the third quarter to snap a 21-21 tie at the break.

The 5-foot-10 inch Troeckler, who did not score in the first quarter, hit two shots. Tyus and junior Journey Coffman also added key baskets.

"We didn't handle their pressure in the first half," Denney said. "I thought we adjusted and made some nice plays in the second half. We executed our offense and did a great job switching defenses."

Freshman Kaylee Eaton capped off the third-quarter blitz with a 3-pointer at the buzzer that gave the Eagles a 37-27 heading into the final eight minutes.

Salem never got closer than to within six points in the fourth quarter.

"We just couldn't get the ball to fall from the perimeter," Salem coach Janet Holst said. "A couple shots fall and it's a different ballgame."

Tyus gave her team the lead for good 25-23 with a foul-line jumper just 79 seconds into the third quarter. Troeckler followed with a stick-back of a blocked shot and Coffman converted on a runner through the lane for a 29-23 lead.

Troeckler hit a pair of foul shots in the closing minutes of the frame before Eaton drilled her period-ending triple.

"Allie's got a knack that a lot of players don't possess," Denney said. "When you need a play, it seems like she's always making it whether it's on the offensive end or the defensive end."

Tyus began the fourth period by scoring on a baseline drive. The Eagles did the rest of their damage from the foul line. Of their final 15 points, 13 came from the stripe.

Salem, which was led by Dearria Watson's 18 points, bolted to a 13-8 lead in the first period while holding Troeckler scoreless.

The Eagles picked up the pace late in the second quarter and went into half even thanks to a basket by Katelyn Turbyfill.

CM is on the vengeance trail this post-season. Denney's crew beat Highland in the regional final after losing three times to the Bulldogs during the regular season. The triumph over Salem continued the sting of paybacks.

"It just shows how much (we've) grown over the season," Denney said. "The freshman and sophomores aren't playing young. They're playing like they're on a mission."

MASSAC COUNTY 41, MASCOUTAH 34

The Patriots used a 7-1 blitz in the third period to break open a tie game.

Junior Alex Cleveland scored a game-high 12 points for Mascoutah (14-15).

Seniors Emily Hoard and Jessie Douglas led Massac County with 11 points each.

"They got a few baskets in the third quarter that gave them enough separation," Mascoutah coach Terry Moeller said.

Massac County led by as many as 12 points in the fourth quarter.

"The last 10 games we've played our best basketball," Patriots' coach Keith Shelton said. "Our intensity really went up in the second half tonight."

Shelton and his players are looking forward to Thursday's meeting with CM.

"I think the world of (Coach) Denney," Shelton said. "They're very good. They go nine or 10 deep. That Troeckler kid, she's a load."