

Boys to begin regional tourney Friday in Denver

Written by Chris Lee

Holyoke boys' basketball team secured a spot in the regional tournament with a 70-60 opening round district victory over Wray Tuesday, Feb. 21 in Holyoke.

The Dragons needed to beat the Eagles to secure a spot in the tournament. From there, they were guaranteed two more district games but wanted to make them count and claim a district championship at NJC Saturday, Feb. 25.

After a second-straight victory over Akron (72-64) in the semifinals, the stage was set for an exciting championship game Saturday night, Feb. 25 at the Bank of Colorado Event Center at NJC. Wiggins advanced through the other side of the bracket to meet up with the Dragons.



Reid Baumgartner gives it his all as he takes the ball to the hoop Saturday, Feb. 25 against Wiggins in the Class 2A District 2 Championship game. □ □

—Enterprise photo

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The two teams met twice in the regular season with each team winning on the other's home court. This grudge match was on a neutral court with a large crowd gathered to watch. After 32 minutes of tough basketball, Wiggins emerged as the Class 2A District 2 champion with a 59-52 victory over the Green and Gold.

The Dragons lifted the runner-up hardware Saturday night but inside, all 12 players wanted to be lifting more. They were disappointed but are still playing basketball.

The Dragons will travel to Denver Friday, March 2 to face Heritage Christian at Metro State College. The winner will advance to Saturday's regional championship for a chance to make the eight-team field at the Class 2A state tournament.

Holyoke 70, Wray 60

Last Tuesday, the Dragons played host to the Wray Eagles, a team they beat twice during the regular season. Wray hit the floor looking to pull the upset and advance to the rest of the district and regional tournaments.

Throughout all four quarters, the large crowd electrified the gymnasium and eventually helped rally the Dragons past the Eagles.

"I thought we started real well, particularly on the offensive end," coach Scott Dille said.

Holyoke jumped out to an early 22-17 lead. Over the next two quarters, the Dragons let up and Wray took advantage. They outscored Holyoke 17-14 in the second and 12-8 in the third.

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Dille said the team just played basketball in the fourth quarter and finished strong to earn the victory.

Five players finished in double digits for the Dragons against Wray. Reid Baumgartner finished with 14, Austin Killin and Jeremy Loutensock each had 13, Tito Fierro 11 and Trevor Dalton 10.

The coach noted last Tuesday's game was the first time some of the players had ever seen themselves in a lose or go home situation. Holyoke has seen some strong play from the younger guys coming off the bench all season and this was their first taste of "post season" basketball.



Austin Killin goes up for two points against Wray Tuesday, Feb. 21. The Dragons beat the Eagles 70-60 to advance to the district semifinal. □ □
—Enterprise photo

Holyoke 72, Akron 64

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Holyoke secured a spot in the district championship with another impressive win over Akron last Thursday. The Dragons dumped the No. 1 seed 72-64.

Even though Holyoke got down early, they kept battling, according to Dille. The coach was really proud of the defense and the way Holyoke rebounded the ball. "We didn't give them many second shots, which against them is a huge thing."

It was a tight 14-15 ball game after one quarter of play with the Rams leading the way. Akron outscored the Dragons 18-12 in the second to take a 33-26 lead into the locker room. Holyoke turned things around and chipped away at the lead in the second half.

They clawed back after outscoring the Rams 16-13 in the third period. The Dragons blew the roof off the place in the final period as they hung 30 on the board while holding the Rams to 18.

"I was really, really happy for the kids," Dille said. "They worked hard and deserve that win. They did a great job of playing together and working together. I couldn't ask for more."

Baumgartner led with 28 points. Logan Tharp and Loutensock also were in double digits, scoring 15 and 13 respectively.

Holyoke 52, Wiggins 59

"It could've been cooler," coach Dille said about Saturday's district championship game. The Dragons hung right with Wiggins but came up short of capturing the district championship trophy.

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No matter the outcome, the Dragons are still playing basketball.

Saturday's championship game was a physical one. Much of the offense on either side came from outside shooting. Wiggins took the early 3-0 lead with a shot from beyond the arc.

Buckets by Killin and Dalton gave Holyoke its only lead of the game 4-3. Two consecutive buckets from the Tigers gave them the lead and they never relinquished it.

Although they never led the game again, Holyoke hung right with the high-powered Wiggins team. At times, the Dragons shot very well. But there were times when they really needed something to fall but it never did. There were also times they needed to make a key stop but were unable to do so, Dille said.

The Dragons had a goal to keep the game close the entire way. "We fought hard," Dille said. "Wiggins is a really good team." The coach felt they made Wiggins earn every point they got.

The Dragons trailed 11-14 after the opening quarter. Baumgartner almost tied the game with a half-court attempt as time ran out, but it just missed.

The two teams continued to battle in the second and Wiggins took a 34-30 lead into the break.

A low scoring third quarter left the Tigers holding onto a 45-40 lead. Holyoke gave all they had in the final period. With 1:30 left in the game, Deyten Klein brought the Dragons within two, 49-51. He was fouled on the shot but was unable to sink the free throw.

Holyoke was forced to foul for the remainder of the game but couldn't ever seem to convert. They wouldn't sink another shot until Klein sunk a three-pointer with :21 left to pull within four, 52-56. Wiggins would go on to make 3-4 shots from the charity stripe to lock up the

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championship.

Klein nailed four from downtown and added a two-pointer to finish with 14 points to lead the Dragons. Baumgartner was the only other one in double figures with 13.



Trevor Dalton concentrates on the bucket as he launches up a shot from the baseline against Wray. □ □
—Enterprise photo

Upcoming action

The Dragons will travel to Metro State College in Denver Friday, March 2 and face Heritage Christian at 4:30 p.m.

Dille said he thinks Heritage will be pretty similar to Holyoke. They aren't the biggest team but

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they can shoot well. He said the team is looking forward to the challenge.

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