

GIRLS BASKETBALL: IHSAA SOUTHERN SEMISTATE

# HEARTBREAKER

71 69  
COLUMBUS EAST CENTER GROVE

## Trojans' hopes dashed on last-second shot

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## INDIANAPOLIS

While Columbus East's players were cutting down the nets celebrating their dramatic 71-69 Class 4A semistate victory Saturday, Center Grove's players wiped tears from their cheeks and sobbed in the arms of loved ones.

The difference between elation and heartache took just seven seconds.

Trojans senior Hillary Bowling capped a comeback that saw Center Grove erase a 16-point deficit as she tied the game at 69, hitting a running jump shot with seven seconds remaining on the clock.

"It was exciting, but I knew we needed to play defense," Bowling said. "I knew it wasn't over."

It wasn't. At least not yet.

A last gasp, buzzer-beating shot by Columbus East guard Shelby Ross sent the Olympians to the state title game and ended the Trojans' hopes of reaching just the second trip to the state finals in Center Grove's history.

"Our kids left it all on the floor, and that's all you can ask for," Center Grove coach Joe Lentz said. "We just got beat. We played well, and we just got beat. They are going to the final game and they deserve it."

Ross' heroics went far beyond her last-second shot. The senior guard seemingly couldn't miss all day in Southport High School's fieldhouse and was the only Olympians player to score in the third quarter.

Ross finished with a career-high 37 points on 16 of 20 shot attempts. But none loomed larger than her final attempt.

"I don't know how (Brianna Layton) saw Shelby, but she got it to her. I just thought it was the shot of all time," Olympians coach Danny Brown said.

Ninth-ranked Columbus East (24-2) had a lead as large as 13 points in the second half, but Center Grove (19-7) was able to crawl back into the game slowly chipping away at the Olympians' advantage.

Down 46-37 with 5:42 remaining in the third quarter, Trojans senior Alex Dewitz stepped to the free throw line to shoot the second of two free throws. However, the lights inside the fieldhouse

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STAFF PHOTO BY JOE SABA

Center Grove sophomore Brittney Shaner, right, drives past Columbus senior Shelby Ross during Saturday's Class 4A Southern Semistate. See more photos at thejournalnet.com.

## CG's teamwork helped Trojans stay in the game



THE (COLUMBUS) REPUBLIC PHOTO BY MIKE DICKBERND

Columbus East players celebrate after the team's last-second semistate victory Saturday against Center Grove.

## INDIANAPOLIS

Driving home in an ice storm from Saturday's Class 4A semistate final between Center Grove and Columbus East, my thoughts weren't of the worsening road conditions or my broken windshield wiper.

All I could think about was the game I had just witnessed.

A game during which I must admit, even I was nervous. That in turn, led me to wonder in amazement how the girls on the court were able to perform at such a high level amid a nerve-wracking atmosphere.

There are good basketball games, and then there are great basketball games. Saturday's matchup belongs



Matthew Glensik

in the latter category.

And that didn't seem likely in the second quarter when the ninth-ranked Olympians enjoyed a 16-point cushion.

You were reminded these two teams played each other in December and Columbus East prevailed by 20. Was this a repeat performance?

But then a glance at the Center Grove roster nudged your psyche back on track. The Trojans had six seniors, including four starters.

If Saturday was to be their final game together, they certainly weren't going to give up without a fight.

With Columbus East's 71-69 win, Hillary Bowling, Alex Dewitz, Lydia Feldman, Heidi Reisinger, Gina Phillips and Alex Hawkins said goodbye to playing Center Grove basketball after competing together since the third grade.

"I've been playing basketball my whole life, and that's my last game, and I'm pretty disappointed with the outcome," a sobbing Dewitz said. "We deserved that game. We worked so hard."

They did. Dewitz, who averaged seven

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## Kenseth bounces back with victory in California



Matt Kenseth won Sunday's Auto Club 500 in Fontana, Calif.

By MIKE HARRIS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## FONTANA, Calif.

With crew chief Robbie Reiser back home in North Carolina on a NASCAR-enforced absence from the racetrack, Matt Kenseth and the rest of the No. 17 team just tried to remember the lessons he has taught them over the years.

Kenseth drove the Roush Fenway Racing Ford to the front and his veter-

an crew gave him a series of sparking pit stops, including a very fast one Sunday near the end of the Auto Club 500 that put the 2003 NASCAR champion into the lead for good.

"It's a special win," an emotional Kenseth said after bouncing back from a disappointing Daytona 500 with his second victory of the week-end and second Nextel Cup win at California Speedway.

"It's not without Robbie though. He spent the week at home while we

were at Daytona building this car. Robbie built this team."

Kenseth, who got caught up in the last-lap melee the previous week at the Daytona 500 and wound up 27th after starting that lap in third, stayed away from trouble this time and took the lead with the fast stop during a caution 23 laps from the finish.

The victory, his 15th in Cup, came with engineer Chip Bolin sitting in for Reiser, sent home for four races after the team was caught cheating at the

beginning of Daytona's Speedweeks. And it came less than 24 hours after Kenseth won the Busch Series race on the same 2-mile oval.

A year ago, it was Jimmie Johnson whose team overcame the loss of crew chief Chad Knaus to get off to a strong start on the way to a championship.

"Those guys didn't let some bad luck stop them or slow them down," Kenseth said. "Everybody on this team knows what Robbie would expect them to do, whether he is here or not."

Kevin Harvick, who swept the Busch and Cup races at Daytona, came out of the final pit stop in second and was making up ground up Kenseth until rookie David Reutimann and former series champion Bobby Labonte crashed on Lap 243 of the 250-lap event.

NASCAR red-flagged the race to give safety officials time to clean up the debris from the wreck. Once the

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