

Cedar Valley girls bumped from playoffs

Written by Jim Ecker

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LONE TREE - It took a special defense to knock the special girls from Cedar Valley Christian out of the Class 1A regional basketball tournament Tuesday night.

The Lisbon Lions put a tourniquet on Cedar Valley star Shelby Hembera in the second half and clipped the Huskies, 39-32, in the second round of the tournament at Lone Tree.

Hembera led all Class 1A players in the state heading into Tuesday's game with a 22.4 scoring average, but she did not make a basket in the second half against Lisbon and finished with 14 points.

The Lions used several versions of a box-and-one defense against Hembera, with two or three defenders in her face all night.

Hembera saw these types of special defenses before, of course. "Almost every game," she said. "It's really difficult, but it opens everybody else up."

Unfortunately for Cedar Valley, the Huskies did not have enough firepower to counter the play.

Hembera had trouble getting the ball, and when she did catch the ball she was too far from the basket for her patented inside moves and soft shots.

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"They did a nice job in the second half of denying her the ball. They really did," said CVC Coach Craig Foote. "They made her catches tough, and when she did catch the ball she was just a step or two off her normal spot.

"They did a nice job of that," he said. "It's not easy to do."

Hembera scored 21 points against Lisbon in a 47-42 loss to the Lions last week. She scored 11 points in the first half Tuesday night, but managed only three free throws in the second half.

Lisbon Coach Darin Hofmeister explained his strategy in simple terms.



"Just to not let a really outstanding player touch the ball," he said. "After we played them the first time, we knew that once she touched it we couldn't stop her. She's too good. She's too crafty, with both hands.

"So we thought our best shot was just to not let her touch it and see how long we could stick with that. And we did it for 32 minutes."

The Lions (9-15) did it especially well in the second half. Cedar Valley led 18-16 at intermission, but the Huskies scored only 14 more points in the second half.

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Lisbon grabbed a 28-23 edge early in the fourth quarter, but Cedar Valley battled back into a 28-28 tie on a free throw by Dominique Eniola and two baskets by Izzy Hoffman.

The Lions spurted to a 34-28 lead, but the Huskies responded again on a basket by Annie McElree and two free throws by Hembera to pull within 34-32 with 4:24 left in the game.

Cedar Valley did not score another point and continued to hurt itself with turnovers, a problem most of the game.

Cedar Valley finished with a 4-17 record for the second year in a row as a member of the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union, but the Huskies made progress this year and were more competitive in most games.

Last year, they lost to Lisbon 63-37 in the first round of the playoffs. This year, they beat Lone Tree in the first round of the playoffs before losing to Lisbon in the second round, but this time by seven points instead of 26.

"I'm very proud of everybody," said Hembera after wiping away her tears. "We played our hearts out."

The Huskies began this season with a 1-14 record, but went 3-3 in their final six games.

"They really finished the season well," said Foote. "I told them to remember the good things, remember their teammates, remember the special moments they had. And just remember that they played for each other."

Hembera, a 6-foot sophomore, finished the season with a scoring average of 21.95 points per game. She scored 461 points this season and has scored 796 in two years.

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Hembera tallied 57.9 percent of Cedar Valley's points this season. She had individual games of 35, 34 and 33 points and topped 20 points in 13 contests.

Hoffman scored eight points Tuesday night. Lindsey Cach had five points.

Danielle Heiken led Lisbon with 14 points. The Lions will face Preston in the next round of the tournament Friday night at Wheatland.

Cedar Valley had another problem with its school bus on the way to Lone Tree for Tuesday's game. The bus blew the head gasket near the North Liberty exit along I-380 and parents had to be summoned to fetch the girls and take them to the game.

It was the fourth problem in recent weeks with the bus involving the brakes, a tire, the alternator and the gasket.

LISBON (39): Z.Light 2 0-0 5, D.Heiken 5 3-5 14, A.Heiken 0 0-0 0, Frey 4 2-2 10, Felderman 0 0-0 0, Givens 2 2-3 6, Smith 1 0-1 2, Hendricks 0 0-0 0, Moothart 1 0-2 2. Totals 15 7-13 39.

CEDAR VALLEY (32): Hembera 5 4-9 14, McElree 1 0-3 2, Slagle 0 0-0 0, Hoffman 3 2-4 8, Cach 2 0-0 5, Eniola 1 1-2 3. Totals 12 7-18 32.

Halftime - Cedar Valley 18, Lisbon 16. 3-point goals - Lisbon 2 (D.Heiken 1, Z.Light 1), Cedar Valley 1 (Cach 1).