

Warriors earn shot at Iowa City West

Written by Tom Fruehling
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The Cedar Rapids Washington players and coaches aren't the only ones who think they can bump off top-ranked and undefeated Iowa City West in the Class 4A substate finals this Tuesday at the U.S. Cellular Center.

"West for a long time has played at a different level than, really, the rest of the state," said long-time Burlington Coach Jeff Bloomer after watching his undermanned Grayhounds get pummeled by the Warriors, 62-39, Friday night.

"We all know that," he said. "But Washington has a lot of length and a lot of athleticism. When you have a combination of those two things, you can pose problems for anyone.

"They're a tough team. They'll be hard for anybody to matchup against."

Always-upbeat Washington Coach Adam Sanchez knows it will be a tall task to upset a 22-0 Trojan juggernaut that has steamrolled nearly every team in its path this year. West dumped the Warriors, 68-46, in their fourth game of the season back in mid-December.

"We stayed with them the first half," Sanchez recalled. "But then they just wore us down.

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"Everyone knows how good they are. And, obviously it will be a huge challenge.

"We're going to have to play solid in every part of our game," he said. "We're going to have to take care of the ball and use our athleticism on rebounding. And, of course, make our shots."

In other words, the Warriors (13-9) will have to play like they did on their home court against an overmatched young Burlington bunch that beat Ottumwa on Monday for their only win this season. The Grayhounds finished the year at 1-22.

The Warriors committed just 10 turnovers, controlled the boards with 45 rebounds and shot 44 percent from the floor. And with wave after wave of substitutions, they simply ran the Grayhounds out of the gym.

Washington closed the first quarter on a 6-0 run, capped by two straight buckets from 6-foot-5 junior jumping jack Laveeche Williams off the bench. On a night when everybody on the roster saw significant playing time and 11 of them scored, Williams was high scorer with 10 along with eight rebounds.

"When I get in there, I try to play hard and get some boards," the rim-runner said afterward. "The coach wants me to play with energy."

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This is a photo of a basketball game. The player in the white jersey is jumping to shoot the ball. The player in the purple jersey is jumping to block the shot. The player in the white jersey with the number 22 is also jumping. The game is taking place in a gymnasium with bleachers in the background.