

Cedar Valley girls win historic game

Written by Jim Ecker

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LONE TREE - Players hugged. Coaches hugged. Parents hugged.

Then they switched partners and hugged some more.

The Cedar Valley Christian girls basketball team collected an historic victory Thursday night when it clipped Lone Tree, 55-51, in overtime in the first round of the Class 1A regional tournament at Lone Tree.

It was the first playoff victory in school history for Cedar Valley, which joined the IGHSAU for varsity competition last season.

Shelby Hembera poured in 34 points to spark the Huskies, but it was a total team effort from all six girls on the squad.

"I'm just so excited," said Coach Craig Foote. "I'm so excited for our girls, I'm so excited for the parents, I'm so excited for the families, for the school, for the teachers, for the administration.

"They have worked so hard to get to the point where this could even be a possibility."

Cedar Valley (4-16) will face Lisbon (8-15) in the second round of the tournament next Tuesday back in Lone Tree. The Huskies lost to Lisbon, 47-42, in the final game of the regular season this past Tuesday and will be meeting for the second time in eight days.

Cedar Valley trailed 48-46 in the final minute of regulation, but Izzy Hoffman made two clutch free throws with 26.5 seconds left to force overtime.

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Hembera scored the first two baskets in overtime to give the Huskies a 52-48 lead. Lone Tree (9-13) pulled within 52-51, but Hembera fed Dominique Eniola for a wide-open layup and a 54-51 edge with 36.5 seconds left.

Hembera could have driven for the layup herself, but unselfishly fed the ball to Eniola for the freshman's only basket in the game.

"She's a really great teammate," Eniola said with a big smile. "When I got the ball and made it I was so ecstatic. I was pretty happy with myself. It was an accomplishment."

Hembera gets all the headlines at Cedar Valley as one of the leading scorers in the state, but all of her teammates made important contributions Thursday night.

Lindsey Cach pitched in 11 points, Hoffman finished with seven points and Eniola scored three points. Annie McElree and Megan Slagle also contributed to the verdict.

Foote squeezed assistant coaches Julianne Lord and Ron Slagle as soon as the game ended in celebration. The girls jumped into each other's arms, and before long their parents were on the court for hugs and pictures.

"Oh my gosh. It's crazy!" said Hembera, a 6-foot sophomore. "It's a blessing from God. Everybody is so happy, especially the seniors (Cach and Hoffman).

"I don't think anybody thought we were going to win. We didn't even think we were going to win. It's crazy."

Cedar Valley grabbed a 10-point lead at 32-22 early in the third period, but Lone Tree rallied and led 46-44 and 48-46 in the final stages before the Huskies found a way to win the biggest game in school history.

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Cedar Valley lost in the first round of the regional tournament last year to Lisbon, 63-28, and finished with a 4-17 record. Now the Huskies have a 4-16 record and will face Lisbon again, this time in Round 2 of the tournament.

"We took the next step," Foote said happily.

CEDAR VALLEY (55): Hembera 16 2-9 34, McElree 0 0-0 0, Slagle 0 0-0 0, Hoffman 2 2-2 7, Cach 5 1-3 11, Eniola 1 1-3 3. Totals 24 6-17 55.

LONE TREE (51): Feldman 3 0-0 6, M.Schmidt 3 0-0 6, Heitman 2 0-0 4, Flemr 8 2-8 18, Chamberlain 4 3-4 11, Edwards 3 0-0 6. Totals 23 5-12 51.

Halftime - Cedar Valley 25, Lone Tree 20. 3-point goals - Cedar Valley 1 (Hoffman 1), Lone Tree none.