

DODGE CITY – Perhaps one of the lessons learned from a 2021 semifinal loss to eventual Class 1A-I state champion Olpe was the ability to close out each of the two halves.

That's what Hodgeman County's Trent Bright said after he watched his Longhorns finish strong in both the second and fourth quarters en route to a 49-43 quarterfinal victory over Clifton-Clyde in the opening game of the 2022 1A-I state tournament at United Wireless Arena.

But he also credited the improved free throw shooting in the fourth quarter when the Longhorns sent Malynn Beil to the line nine times and she cashed in six of those en route to a game-high 16 points.

"We just did a good job of closing out those two quarters," Bright said. "We didn't shoot free throws well at all in the first half (4-of-9)."

Bright also said that Clifton-Clyde's six 3-pointers also kept the game close.

"They've got some good shooters and knocked 'em down," Bright said of the Eagles. "We got into foul trouble early and we've got to clean that up."

The first closeout came in the second quarter with a 14-4 run that produced a 23-15 lead at intermission. Clifton-Clyde came out strong in the third quarter, taking a 25-24 lead before the Longhorns went on an 12-6 mini-run to end the third up by five, 36-31.

The lead grew to 13, 44-31 and it appeared the Longhorns might be on cruise control. But Shea Wurtz and Emma Norbert cashed in treys to slice the lead to 45-40 with 1:11 to play and it was fingernail-biting time.

Beil then provided the final closeout with four free throws.

The Longhorns kept their perfect season alive and are now 24-0 as they prepare for their 4 p.m. semifinal battle on Friday. They will face the winner of the Osborne-Pretty Prairie contest. The loss ends the season for the Eagles with a 16-9 record.

Hodgeman County had fallen behind early, trailing 6-5, before finishing off the first quarter on a mini 4-point run for a 9-6 lead. Clifton-Clyde regained the edge at 11-9, but then the Longhorns connected for eight straight points, including a pair of three-pointers to go up 17-11.

The remainder of the quarter was back-and-forth with Hodgeman County gaining a 6-4 edge to make it 23-15 at intermission. Kaylee James and Morgan Ruff each had eight points for the Longhorns while Shea Wurtz matched them to pace the Eagles in the opening half.

Hodgeman County also got 12 points from Morgan Ruff and the Longhorns hit 16-of-39 field goals for 41.0 percent. The Eagles were led by Wurtz and Nobert with 15 and 10 points, respectively. Wurtz finished with a double-double by pulling down a game-high 10 boards.

Hodgeman County held a narrow 27-25 rebounding edge. Jessie Ruff had six for the winning effort. Turnovers plagued both teams, with Hodgeman guilty of 19 miscues to 23 for the Eagles.

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### **HODGEMAN COUNTY 49, CLIFTON-CLYDE 43**

**Clifton-Clyde 6 9 16 12 -- 43**

**Hodgeman County 9 14 13 13 -- 49**

Clifton-Clyde (16-9) – Steinbrock 3-7 0-1 6, Sikes 3-6 0-0 8, Nobert 4-12 1-2 12, Wurtz 4-14 6-7 15, Thrasher 1-2 0-0 2. Totals 15-41 7-10 43.

Hodgeman County (24-0) – James 3-7 2-3 8, M. Ruff 4-8 1-2 12, Beil 3-10 8-11 16, Shiew 2-4 0-2 5, J. Ruff 2-2 0-1 4, Burke 2-6 0-1 4. Totals 16-39 11-20 49.

3-point goals—Clifton-Clyde 6-19 (Steinbrock 0-1, Sikes 2-4, Nobert 3-9, Wurtz 1-5), Hodgeman County 6-13 (M. Ruff 3-5, Beil 2-6, Shiew 1-1, Schaffer 0-1).

Rebounds—Clifton-Clyde 25 (Wurtz 10), Hodgeman County 27 (J. Ruff 6). Assists—Clifton-Clyde 9 (Steinbrock 6), Hodgeman County 11 (M. Ruff, Beil 4 each). Fouls—Clifton-Clyde 20, Hodgeman County 17. Fouled out—Clifton-Clyde (Steinbrock, Sikes).