

## **Pretty Prairie holds off Hodgeman County in 1A-I girls semis**

DODGE CITY – Sometimes it doesn't matter how you win, as long you come out on top.

Perhaps that was the feeling of an exhausted by exuberant Scott Goering after he watched his Pretty Prairie Bulldogs hold off a furious rally by Hodgeman County's Longhorns to capture a heart-beating 37-32 semifinal triumph at the Class 1A-I state tournament Friday afternoon at United Wireless Arena.

The victory advances them into the championship game Saturday at 6:15 p.m. against the winner of Friday's other late semifinal between Centralia and Burlingame. The Bulldogs have never won a state title and it has been 22 years since they last played in the state.

They've twice been state runner-ups, in 1978 and 1996. The Bulldogs are now 24-1 while Hodgeman County lost for the first time in its 25 games.

This game almost slipped away from a tight grasp the Bulldogs had midway through the third period when they had built a 32-16 advantage over a cold-shooting Longhorns' squad that managed only two field goals in the first half which led to a 26-12 Bulldog lead at intermission.

"Nobody expected an easy road, that's for sure," said Goering. "They (Hodgeman County) wer intense on defense and we haven't seen that kind of pressure all year."

Another big key was the early long-range shooting of the Bulldogs who made all five of their 3-pointers in the opening half. They finished 5-of-14 from behind the arc.

The Bulldogs overcame 18 turnovers and just 35.5 percent field goals and a chilly 10-of-22 effort at the free throw line. In fact, they missed eight free throws in the fourth quarter alone.

"I think our defense in limiting their runouts after a turnover was big for us," Goering said. "We got some big rebounds off misses at the end. Those were the things that made the difference."

Several times in their furious rally the Longhorns had opportunities to make the comeback all the way, getting it to a one possession game at 34-31 with 1:30

remaining after Grace Shiew canned a 15-foot jumper. But Hodgeman County missed a shot at 1:02, and made their final point on a 1-of-2 free throw trip by Jessie Ruff at 0:31 when the score was 35-32.

Pretty Prairie got two 1-of-2 freebies from Abigail White and Joley Harbaugh in the final 14.6 seconds to make it a two possession game and the last gasp rally fell short when the Longhorns had a ball go off the knee and out of bounds.

“I’m proud of the girls to give that kind of effort and only give up 11 points in the second half,” Hodgeman County Coach Trent Bright said afterward. “It was a tough one and we had our chances. But I liked the fight the girls showed, but these are always hard to take.”

No Pretty Prairie cracked double figure scoring, with Bailey Young’s eight points topping the list. Shiew led Hodgeman County with 13 points and Morgan Ruff added 10, including a pair of 3-pointers in that late rally. The Bulldogs owned a 35-26 rebounding advantage with Young and McKenna Vogl grabbing eight each. Jessie Ruff had 6 for the Longhorns.

The Longhorns (24-1) will take on the loser of the Centralia-Burlingame contest in the third-place game Saturday at 2 p.m.

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### **PRETTY PRAIRIE 37, HODGEMAN COUNTY 32**

Pretty Prairie 15 11 7 4 -- 37

Hodgeman County 5 7 14 6 -- 32

Pretty Prairie (24-1) – Joley Harbaugh 1-2 1-2 4, White 1-2 3-4 6, Young 2-7 1-2 7, Webster 0-1 0-0 0, Jorah Harbaugh 2-7 1-3 6, Young 3-5 2-7 8, Vogl 2-5 2-4 6, Kruse 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 11-31 10-22 37.

Hodgeman County (24-1) – James 0-6 0-0 0, M. Ruff 4-12 0-0 10, Beil 0-10 5-6 5, Shiew 5-7 3-6 13, Dandel 1-3 0-0 2, Schaffer 0-1 0-0 0, J. Ruff 0-2 2-4 2. Totals 10-41 10-16 32.

3-point goals—Pretty Prairie 5-15 (Joley Harbaugh 1-2, White 1-1, A. Young 2-5, Jorah Harbaugh 1-5, B. Young 0-1, Vogl 0-1), Hodgeman Co. 2-10 (M. Ruff 2-6, Beil 0-3, Shiew 0-1). Rebounds—Pretty Prairie 35 (B. Young, Vogl 8 each), Hodgeman Co. 26 (Schaffer 6). Assists—Pretty Prairie 10 (Jorah Harbaugh 5), Hodgeman Co. 8

(Beil 6). Fouls—Pretty Prairie 14, Hodgeman Co. 17. Fouled out—Hodgeman Co. (James).