

Olpe's boys take flight to second straight 1A-I state crown

Eagles make history with consecutive basketball, football titles

DODGE CITY – Just a year ago, the Olpe Eagles came into the Class 1A-I state championship as a slight underdog against the No. 1 seed South Gray Rebels and left with the school's first-ever boys state basketball title after a 54-47 victory.

On Saturday, as the No. 1 seed and a target on their back, the Eagles didn't seem bothered by the hype of being the favored team.

They looked like a state champion, played like a state champion, and walked off the United Wireless Arena court with a second state championship in hand.

This time, the scoreboard read Olpe 66, South Gray 42.

And the score reflected the start-to-finish blitz that the Eagles displayed.

In winning its second straight basketball crown, tacked on to their two straight 1A 11-man state football titles (2020-2021), the Eagles joined Hanover as the only school in Kansas history to accomplish the back-to-back double state triumphs in the two major sports. And the first to do so in 11-man football.

To nobody's surprise, the ringleader of the onslaught was senior forward Derek Hoelting, who seems to believe United Wireless in home away from home.

The 6-0 senior had one of his career nights on the biggest stage by exploding for 30 points and adding in 10 rebounds for a double-double that will go down in the school's history books. He was 11-of-17 from the field, 3-of-5 from behind the arc, 5-of-7 at the free throw line and added in 3 assists and 4 steals.

"This means a lot coming in my senior year," an elated Hoelting said afterward. "This team is like my family."

Nothing like having the target on your back as the favorite, but also accepting the challenge.

"We take that in knowing we're going to get the other team's best shot and we like that challenge," Hoelting said. "We wanted to get out early and make them chase us."

And that they did.

It was, after all, a dominating performance by the Eagles who seem to thrive on both ends of the court. Using a stifling defense and a surgeon-like offense, they exploded for a 20-7 first quarter lead and were up by 17, 37-20, at intermission.

The Eagles took flight early and often, knocking down 4-of-5 treys in the opening stanza en route to a 20-7 bulge while making 7-of-9 overall. Their stifling defense, meanwhile, limited the Rebels to just 3-of-10 in that stretch.

“This will create a lot of memories for when I’m a little older,” Hoelting said. “I think we knew they’d zone us and we just set up our offense in the middle and found the gaps for us to get good looks.”

It was a little better in the second period for the Rebels, but still they could not slow down the Eagles’ offense, which finished hitting 6-of-9 from behind the arc in the first 16 minutes. Olpe was 14-of-22 from the field for 63.6 percent. South Gray did improve some, hitting 4-of-10 to finish the half at 7-of-20.

Olpe dominated the rebounding, too, owning a 14-8 lead on the boards and secured six steals from the Rebels with its aggressive defense.

By intermission, with a 37-20 lead in hand, Damon Redker and Derek Hoelting, already had double-figure games with 14 and 13 points, respectively, and were a combined 11-of-17 from the field and 4-of-6 from behind the arc.

South Gray, on the other hand, could get just 11 combined points from its two leading scorers, seniors Brent Penner and Brady Deges.

An 11-4 run for the Rebels to start the second half, pulled them to within 10 at 41-31 when Brady Deges hit one of his four treys. Olpe coach Chris Schmidt called timeout and set up a play that his squad ran to perfection and that started an 8-0 run to put them back up by 18, 49-31, late in the third.

It never was close after that.

“I think Derek proved that he’s one of the best players in Kansas,” Schmidt said of his standout senior. “We spend a lot of time preaching things on defense and if we do those things, we’re pretty successful.”

Schmidt said his team’s strategy to make it tough on Deges and 6-3 Brent Penner paid off in dividends.

“If we kept them slowed down, we knew we had a good opportunity and we were able to do that with just a few exceptions,” Schmidt said. “I’m happy for the kids. It’s a great group and they do all the little things to be successful. I don’t have to do a lot to communicate things to them. They’re eager, they listen, and then they go out and play like this.”

On the historical accomplishment of the football-basketball double-double, Schmidt (also the football coach) said he hadn’t thought much about it.

“We’ll address that with the kids and enjoy it for a while,” Schmidt said. “I’m sure it will mean more once we have a chance to enjoy this one more.”

In addition to Hoelting’s monster game, the Eagles got 14 points from his senior sidekick, Damon Redeker, who added 14 points and Truman Bailey, who chipped in with 12 points. Deges was the lone double-figure scorer for the Rebels with 12. Penner managed just five points off 2-of-8 shooting.

The storyline of shooting was evident – Olpe blistered the nets at a 54.3 percent clip (25-of-46) compared to 15-of-43 (34.9 percent) for the Rebels. The rebounding was just as lopsided as the score, with Olpe owning a 34-18 advantage on the boards.

“I think both championships are special, but they do feel a little different,” Hoelting said. “Anytime you can go out your senior year on top, it’s a great feeling.”

It was that kind of day when the Eagles took flight and never landed until the final seconds ticked off the clock.

OLPE 66, SOUTH GRAY 42

SOUTH GRAY 7 13 13 9 -- 42

OLPE 20 17 12 17 -- 66

South Gray (23-3) – Penner 2-8 0-0 5, Deges 4-12 0-0 12, Davis 2-5 1-1 6, Jantz 0-2 2-2 2, Lupercio 4-8 0-0 8, Dyck 3-7 2-2 9, Martin 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 15-43 5-5 42.

Olpe (25-1) – B. Redeker 0-1 0-0 0, Bailey 4-7 2-3 12, Hoelting 11-17 5-7 30, D. D. Redeker 6-12 0-0 14, Heins 2-3 0-0 5, B. Skalsky 0-0 1-2 1, E. Redeker, 0-1 0-0 0, T. Skalsky 2-3 0-0 4, Temeyer 0-1 0-0 0, Foraker 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 25-46 8-12 66.

3-point goals—South Gray 7-19 (Penner 1-4, Deges 4-10, Davis 1-3, Dyck 1-1, Martin 0-1), Olpe 8-14 (Bailey 2-4, Hoelting 3-5, D. Redeker 2-3, Heins 1-1, Temeyer 0-1). Rebounds—South Gray 18 (Lupercio 8), Olpe 34 (Hoelting 10). Assists—South Gray 9 (Jantz 3), Olpe 14 (D. Redeker 4). Fouls—South Gray 11, Olpe 8. Fouled out—None.

Class 1A-I Scoreboard

United Wireless Arena/Dodge City

Saturday, March 12

Boys

Third Place

Macksville 66, Solomon 54

Championship

Olpe 66, Montezuma-South Gray 42