

Rams win battle for region title

By James Edward
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Win or lose Tuesday night, Highland was always going to be considered one of the favorites in next week's 4A state tournament.

It's always sweeter to go in as a region champ though.

Despite a few bumps along the way in region play — which coach Keith West chalked up to simply being human — Highland put the finishing touches on the Region 6 title with a 56-46 victory over Olympus.

"This is our first step into what we want. Feels good to go out of here with a win in our last game in this building," said Highland point guard Sam Orchard.

It wasn't the prettiest win, but Highland heads into the playoffs as the No. 1 seed and earned the right to face Mountain Crest the following Tuesday at 5:50 p.m. at Weber State. By losing, Olympus got the second seed and drew Ogden in the tourney's first game at 9:30 a.m.

"Now it's time to go to state and start all over. I like where we're at," said West.

"We knew what would happen had we lost," said Oly coach Matt Barnes. "It was a championship game; we wanted it."

A 60-second shooting barrage in the third quarter



Jordan Marsh (left) and Colton Stewart converge on Highland's Sam Orchard, forcing him to pass to a teammate while in the air.

proved to be the difference.

With Highland leading 31-28 midway through the quarter, Liam Thomas and Steven Divver connected on three straight treys to extend the lead to 40-28.

"Divv and all the other guys who hit big shots, they hit it all day in practice. If people key on anyone and they're open, they'll hit it," said Orchard.

Olympus made a run early in the fourth quarter to cut Highland's lead to 43-39, but the Rams' defense was simply too good for the Titans to sustain the momentum the rest of the way.

"We defended our tail off tonight. Our goal was to come out and do a job defensively," said West.

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TOP LEFT: Colton Stewart gets a hand to the throat from Sam Orchard while chasing a rebound.

TOP RIGHT: Stewart reaches high to block a shot.



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- Coach Matt Barnes

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Highland's offense was just as efficient shooting 50 percent from the field and knocking down eight three-pointers.

Olympus was the sharper team early, connecting on 6-of-8 field goals in the first quarter to take a 13-7 lead. Highland's defense buckled down in the second quarter forcing Olympus into six turnovers as it took a 24-22 halftime lead.

The teams traded buckets early in the third quarter, and it looked like the rivals were headed for a fantastic finish. The Rams' lethal outside shooting changed all that.

Diver and Orchard finished the game with 13 points each. Lew Evans chipped in with 12, all coming in the first half.

"We've been telling these guys, trust the offense. Sometimes we get worried about Sam and Nate (Fakahafua) creating on their own," said West. "We have other guys, let the offense work. Sam and Nate will get what they get, but you other guys are going to get wide open shots if you're just patient and run the stuff."

Tanner Curtis scored 15 points to lead Olympus, which shot an impressive 51 percent from the field but a disappointing 45 percent from the free throw line.

GAME SUMMARY

Olympus	13	9	9	15	- 46
Highland	7	17	16	16	- 56

OLYMPUS (46) – Tanner Curtis 6-8 0-0 15, Sam Williams 4-9 0-0 8, Carter Young 1-3 3-4 5, Will Cannon 2-3 1-3 5, Colton Stewart 4-7 1-4 10, Jordan Marsh 1-3 0-0 3, Nic Johnson 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 18 5-11 46.

HIGHLAND (56) – Sam Orchard 3-6 6-8 13, Steven Diver 3-7 4-6 13, Lew Evans 3-5 4-5 12, Nate Fakahafua 2-4 2-3 6, Liam Thomas 2-2 2-2 8, Matt Barker 1-1 0-0 2, David Diver 0-1 2-2 2, Charlie Morris 0-2 0-0 0, Max Handy 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 14-28 20-26 56.

Total fouls: Olympus 20, Highland 18.

Fouled out: Cannon.

Three-point shooting: Olympus 5-13 (Curtis 3, Marsh, Stewart). Highland 8-14 (S. Diver 3, Evans 2, Thomas 2, Orchard).

Rebounds: Olympus 19 (Young 5), Highland 14 (Fakahafua 4)

Turnovers: Olympus 13, Highland 9.