

Riverton KOs Davis to reach semis

Saunders ignites first-quarter start as Silverwolves roar to another win

By Trevor Phibbs
Deseret News

In a flash it was over. Davis blinked, and a mere two minutes and 26 seconds into the game, the Darts were on the deck.

Riverton used conversions on its first three possessions to wobble the Darts' legs. Then, after three Davis turnovers, the Silverwolves countered with six points from Whitney Saunders to jump out to a 12-0 lead with 5:34 left in the first quarter.

"The defense was outstanding, pressuring the ball and collapsing on post entry passes," said Riverton coach Ron Ence. "It was clearly our best start, best first half, and probably our best overall game of the season."

The shocking start left Davis puzzled, and the athletic Silverwolves left no room for imagination in their 58-31 knockout Wednesday in the quarterfinals of the girls 5A state tournament at Salt Lake Community College.

"That was our best start because we took them so seriously," Saunders, who tallied 12 points and five boards in 22 minutes, said. "We were like, 'This is Davis.'"

The tendency to fall into complacency after a quick start is fairly common. However, the Silverwolves kept their foot on the pedal after watching Layton overcome a double-digit deficit against Alta earlier in the day.

"We saw earlier comebacks," Saunders SAID, "and we don't want to settle for this."

The Silverwolves shot 53 percent in the first half, while limiting the Darts to 4 of 19 from the field. Riverton, exploiting Davis' relative lack of speed with athleticism, took a 38-16 lead at the



Mallory Bostic



ABOVE: Whitney Saunders scores two points early in the game.

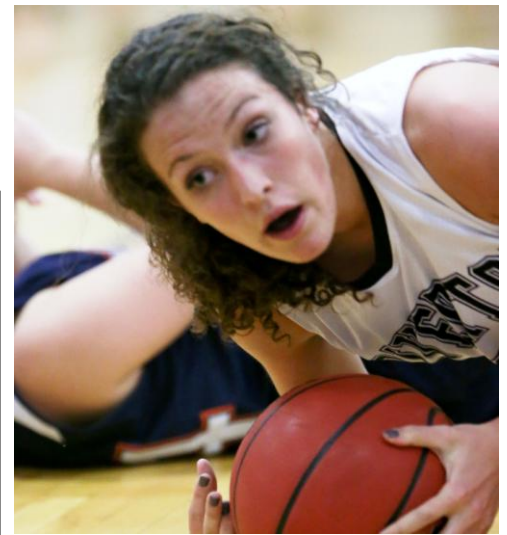
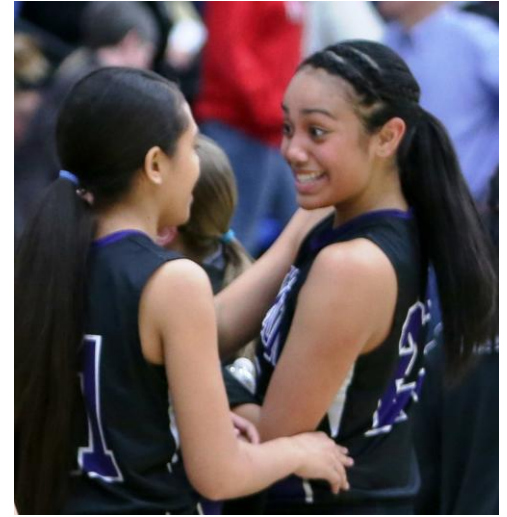
RIGHT: Elyssa Marchant

break. Surprisingly, the undersized 'Wolves won the battle in the paint handily, 32-14.

"It was great because we'd been having trouble in the first quarter. We're usually a third-quarter team," said Riverton's Mallory Bostic. "We don't play to our potential in the first quarter, so it was really great to jump up and not have to



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COACH ENCE'S COMMENTS: Because we were the first game of the tournament, we got to rest and prepare for two days until our Wednesday night second round game.

We played Davis in a hard fought game to open the season. They seemed to struggle in preseason, but clearly hit their stride winning the region 1 title over good teams like Layton, Syracuse and Fremont. Their talented post had 27 points in their first round game.

Familiar game plan for us: pressure their guards, keep post from getting the ball, and help like crazy if she does get it.

We were clearly more relaxed and confident than on Monday. The girls came out and outplayed them right from the tip off. The defense was outstanding pressuring the ball and collapsing on post entry passes. We were able to dictate the tempo in the second half and hold off any comeback attempts. As a team, we held Davis to their lowest point total of the season.

We had great balance and teamwork! Riverton got to return to the "Final Four" for the second year in a row and the fourth time in the last six years. What a great tribute to the players, past and present.

TOP LEFT: Coach Ron Ence signals a play while the Riverton bench cheers.

TOP RIGHT: Kiana Tai and Tiena Afu share a happy moment.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Mallory Bostic

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worry about playing catch-up."

In Davis' first-round matchup against West, center Jessica Richardson exploded for a season-high 27 points.

"We saw that (Richardson) scored so many points (on Monday) and we were like, 'She's not doing that,'" Saunders said.

Riverton released Gerika Ballard on Richardson, who limited the Darts' star to only nine points.

"We watched their film. We played them earlier in preseason, and we didn't beat them by a lot," Bostic said. "It was a close game and they were a good team so we had that in our minds. We said, 'We have to take this serious,' and we did."

GAME SUMMARY

Riverton	20	18	7	13	-	58
Davis	9	7	5	10	-	31

RIVERTON (58) – Mallory Bostic 2 4-4 8, Jamie Smith 3 2-3 9, Gerika Ballard 4 1-1 9, Shelby Richards 2 1-1 6, Whitney Saunders 5 2-3 12, Tiena Afu 5 2-2 12, Pume Currie 1 0-0 2, Kirsten Spencer 0 0-0 0, Tess Campbell 0 0-0 0, Kiana Tai 0 0-0 0, Elyssa Marchant 0 0-0 0, Rachel McDougal 0 0-0 0, Morgan Littlewood 0 0-0 0, Jordan Landis 0 0-0 0, Alisha Hopkin 0 0-0 0, Rebecca McDougal 0 0-0 0, Jennica Hogue 0 0-1 0. Totals 22 12-15 58.

DAVIS (31) – Caitlyn Gibson 0 0-0 0, Emily Bott 0 0-0 0, Morgan Hartvigsen 0 0-0 0, Natalie Mecham 2 5-6 9, Jessica Richardson 3 3-6 9, Sarah Beecher 2 2-3 6, Meaghan David 1 0-0 2, Kayley Neilson 2 0-1 5, Kaylee Brown 0 0-0 0, Karly Sprague 0 0-0 0. Totals 14 7-15 36.

Total fouls: Riverton 18, Davis 14. **Fouled out:** None.

Three-point goals: Riverton 2 (Smith, Richards), Davis 1 (Neilson).